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AMERICAN ESSAYS

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THE HAWTHORNE CLASSICS

AMERICAN ESSAYS

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS volume follows a plan slightly different from that of its companion, "English Essays," for a reason noted in the Introduction. It gives something from our very best essayists, however. It will seem that Emerson cannot be wholly understood by a young reader. But it is well for any one to read something of Emerson, even if he do not understand it thoroughly. Lowell's essay is a good apology for offering Emerson to those who cannot grasp his whole thought. The notes are few. Emerson and Lowell would permit many, but we have here helps only in places that did not seem themselves to offer the clew to explanation.

E. E. H., JR.

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INTRODUCTION

IN our volume on "English Essayists" we have described the essay in what may be said to be the stricter sense of the word, or, more correctly, the original sense, that of attempt or experiment. We there saw that the essay of Addison, Goldsmith, Lamb, Thackeray, was no formal treatment of some subject, but the easy following out of one's idea, whatever it were, without precision or particularity, but with the pleasant leisure that gives such a taste of the personality of the writer. The word "essay" is, of course, now correctly used for a wide variety of short-pieces of prose, from the matured and well-weighed aphorisms of Bacon to the brilliant and picturesque studies of Macaulay; indeed, for any treatment that does not aim at being finished and complete. But what we should call the true essay character is that of such writing as we have in the "Essays of Elia" and the "Spectator."

Of such essays the literature of our own country has comparatively little. It may be for many reasons. Perhaps Americans, as a nation, are too practical to take pleasure in what might be called

intellectual idling; it may be that they feel the necessity of accomplishing something, or, to put the matter in another way, it may be that they have not leisure enough either to write anything of such an idle character as the essay, or to read it. Whatever be the reason, we have on our side of the water not many collections like those by English writers which may be easily found.

It is not unnatural, however, that among the true essayists should be found Washington Irving. Irving was the first great representative man of letters in America. This title would belong to Franklin were it not that with Franklin literature was always something secondary. Franklin was a man of action, a practical man. He always wanted to accomplish something, and he valued his power with his pen, his genius for letters and scholarship, according as it helped him to bring about his plans in statesmanship and everyday life. With Irving it was not so. He was not a practical man. It is true that he studied law, and that for a time he transacted business, but the real interest of his life was literature. He devoted himself to literature at first carelessly, and, finally, with his whole heart; and he was regarded as essentially a man of letters. Like Franklin, he represented his country at one of the courts of Europe, but in his case the position of minister was offered to him as a compliment to him and to the country of which he had written

so excellently, and not, as with Franklin, on account of the ability to transact difficult matters better than anybody else.

As a professed man of letters, then, it was not remarkable that Irving should have at first expressed himself chiefly in essays. He was interested in history, and later in life he was noted as a historian. He was interested in fiction, too, and in his short stories he set a fashion in which his countrymen have distinguished themselves. He was a humorist, also, but his ambitions rose rather above merely humorous writing. He had also before him when he began to write, as great models of English style, Addison and Goldsmith. It was natural that his earlier work should have been the essay. But for whatever reason, even in the essay his thoughts took rather a more definite form than those of his great contemporary, Lamb. It is true that his first collection, "The Sketch Book," was made up of miscellaneous essays and stories, yet even there a number of his sketches were strung together upon the account of his visit to Bracebridge Hall, and later he generally took some subject, as Bracebridge Hall again, or the Alhambra, as a center around which to group stories or essays, and he always was quite definite in treating his subject. Yet though, in a way, not such pure essays as those of Elia, the essays of Irving are very attractive bits of writing, and carry us along with the writer through all the

festivities and traditions associated with Christmas, for instance, with much the same interest and attraction that would be had by Lamb or Montaigne.

Another of our typical essayists is George William Curtis. Toward the end of his life Curtis wrote every month, for *Harper's Magazine*, a paper called "The Editor's Easy Chair." These were true essays, not unlike in character Thackeray's "Roundabout Papers." Each month he thought of some subject around which he might weave his ideas and fancies, and the result was a collection full of character and thought. But these were not Curtis's first experiments in this direction. In "Prue and I" we have a series of papers which, though put in the form of reveries (shall we call them?) of an old bookkeeper, are quite as much essays as if Curtis had written them in his own person. Some of them are more of an exercise of fancy, it is true, but there is thought in them too, perhaps as much as he afterwards put into his lay sermons from "The Editor's Easy Chair."

The essay is a purely literary form, and there is no greater man of letters in our own literature than James Russell Lowell. Yet his essays, like those of his famous contemporary, Macaulay, are too definite treatments of specific subjects to be called essays in the narrower sense. Lowell wrote on Democracy or on Chaucer, on the birds of his garden or the books on his shelves, because he was

absorbed for the time in those things; he rarely allowed his thoughts to wander where they would, without guide or goal. Lowell was in truth a good deal of a scholar; he was always interested in telling what was the fact about the man, for instance, of whom he wrote. He was interested in the man's work, and he was always curious as to his character, wished to know it and write of it. Much of his writing, however, has the true essay-quality, for his mind was richly stored, and he could never get very far without reminiscence or allusion. And sometimes when he left the criticism of one or another author and took some less definite subject, his work might almost be thought of as an essay in the narrower sense.

But probably the most famous of American essays, the most widely known, are those of Emerson. They have certainly something of the true essay-quality about them. They move freely; they are unconstrained. But still, like the essays of Bacon, they are a little too concise or too epigrammatic to be quite the free movement of thought. They are also a little too carefully set together. It is not the disinterested thinking of the man who likes to think; Emerson was far too practical for that. We may always think of him as an idealist, but he was very practical too. He always seems to have in mind the desire to encourage and strengthen and help our better nature. He was no idler or man of leisure; his earnest

desire was to make America more vigorous, strong, and manly in its living and thinking. It is true that he never attempted a definitely systematic work on morals or human nature: he put his essays together without much thought of carefully arranged plan, well satisfied if each piece of writing contained the spirit of its topic and the incentive to a more lively and active appreciation of it. This gives us something of the true manner of his thought, although the movement of his style hardly seems the free movement of the essayist. But his essays are very personal, as indeed the sincere writing of any man must tend to be who has a strong personality.

Thus in each of our four essayists we have found something of the true essay-quality, in each case with a good deal of something else. We may appreciate it surely, this common quality, without losing sight of what each one particularly has for us, — the old-fashioned ease of Irving, the charm of grave and gay imagination that makes us wonder why Curtis was not a poet, the richly reminiscent mind of Lowell, the surcharged intensity of Emerson. It is well to read them together; for though they have all something in common, the general character, yet their own traits are by no means lost in the background.

FROM "THE SKETCH BOOK"



CHRISTMAS

But is old, old, good old Christmas gone? Nothing but the hair of his good, gray, old head and beard left? Well, I will have that, seeing I cannot have more of him.

HUE AND CRY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

A man might then behold
At Christmas, in each hall,
Good fires to curb the cold,
And meat for great and small.
The neighbors were friendly bidden,
And all had welcome true,
The poor from the gates were not chidden,
When this old cap was new.

OLD SONG.

THERE is nothing in England that exercises a more delightful spell over my imagination than the lingerings of the holiday customs and rural games of former times. They recall the pictures my fancy used to draw in the May morning of life, when as yet I only knew the world through books, and believed it to be all that poets had painted it; and they bring with them the flavor of those honest days of yore, in which, perhaps with equal fallacy, I am apt to think the world

was more homebred, social, and joyous than at present. I regret to say that they are daily growing more and more faint, being gradually worn away by time, but still more obliterated by modern fashion. They resemble those picturesque morsels of Gothic architecture, which we see crumbling in various parts of the country, partly dilapidated by the waste of ages, and partly lost in the additions and alterations of latter days. Poetry, however, clings with cherishing fondness about the rural game and holiday revel, from which it has derived so many of its themes — as the ivy winds its rich foliage about the Gothic arch and moldering tower, gratefully repaying their support, by clasping together their tottering remains, and, as it were, embalming them in verdure.

Of all the old festivals, however, that of Christmas awakens the strongest and most heartfelt associations. There is a tone of solemn and sacred feeling that blends with our conviviality, and lifts the spirit to a state of hallowed and elevated enjoyment. The services of the church about this season are extremely tender and inspiring: they dwell on the beautiful story of the origin of our faith, and the pastoral scenes that accompanied its announcement; they gradually increase in fervor and pathos during the season of Advent, until they break forth in full jubilee on the morning that brought peace and good-will to men. I do not know a grander effect of music

on the moral feelings than to hear the full choir and the pealing organ performing a Christmas anthem in a cathedral, and filling every part of the vast pile with triumphant harmony.

It is a beautiful arrangement, also, derived from days of yore, that this festival, which commemorates the announcement of the religion of peace and love, has been made the season for gathering together of family connections, and drawing closer again those bands of kindred hearts, which the cares and pleasures and sorrows of the world are continually operating to cast loose; of calling back the children of a family, who have launched forth in life, and wandered widely asunder, once more to assemble about the paternal hearth, that rallying-place of the affections, there to grow young and loving again among the endearing mementos of childhood.

There is something in the very season of the year, that gives a charm to the festivity of Christmas. At other times, we derive a great portion of our pleasures from the mere beauties of nature. Our feelings sally forth and dissipate themselves over the sunny landscape, and we "live abroad and everywhere." The song of the bird, the murmur of the stream, the breathing fragrance of spring, the soft voluptuousness of summer, the golden pomp of autumn; earth with its mantle of refreshing green, and heaven with its deep, delicious blue and its cloudy magnificence,—all fill

us with mute but exquisite delight, and we revel in the luxury of mere sensation. But in the depth of winter, when nature lies despoiled of every charm, and wrapped in her shroud of sheeted snow, we turn for our gratifications to moral sources.¹ The dreariness and desolation of the landscape, the short, gloomy days and darksome nights, while they circumscribe our wanderings, shut in our feelings also from rambling abroad, and make us more keenly disposed for the pleasures of the social circle. Our thoughts are more concentrated; our friendly sympathies more aroused. We feel more sensibly the charm of each other's society, and are brought more closely together by dependence on each other for enjoyment. Heart calleth unto heart, and we draw our pleasures from the deep wells of living kindness which lie in the quiet recesses of our bosoms; and which, when resorted to, furnish forth the pure element of domestic felicity.

The pitchy gloom without makes the heart dilate on entering the room filled with the glow and warmth of the evening fire. The ruddy blaze diffuses an artificial summer and sunshine through the room, and lights up each countenance in a kindlier welcome. Where does the honest face of hospitality expand into a broader and more cordial smile—where is the shy glance of love more sweetly eloquent—than by the winter fire-

¹ One should read Lowell's "A Good Word for Winter" here.

side? and as the hollow blast of wintry wind rushes through the hall, claps the distant door, whistles about the casement, and rumbles down the chimney, what can be more grateful than that feeling of sober and sheltered security, with which we look round upon the comfortable chamber and the scene of domestic hilarity?

The English, from the great prevalence of rural habits throughout every class of society, have always been fond of those festivals and holidays which agreeably interrupt the stillness of country life; and they were in former days particularly observant of the religious and social rights of Christmas. It is inspiring to read even the dry details which some antiquaries have given of the quaint humors, the burlesque pageants, the complete abandonment to mirth and good fellowship, with which this festival was celebrated. It seemed to throw open every door, and unlock every heart. It brought the peasant and the peer together, and blended all ranks in one warm generous flow of joy and kindness. The old halls of castles and manor-houses resounded with the harp and the Christmas carol, and their ample boards groaned under the weight of hospitality. Even the poorest cottage welcomed the festive season with green decorations of bay and holly—the cheerful fire glanced its rays through the lattice, inviting the passenger to raise the latch, and join the gossip knot huddled round the hearth

beguiling the long evening with legendary jokes, and oft-told Christmas tales.

One of the least pleasing effects of modern refinement is the havoc it has made among the hearty old holiday customs. It has completely taken off the sharp touchings and spirited reliefs of these embellishments of life, and has worn down society into a more smooth and polished, but certainly a less characteristic surface. Many of the games and ceremonials of Christmas have entirely disappeared, and, like the sherris sack of old Falstaff, are becoming matters of speculation and dispute among commentators. They flourished in times full of spirit and lustihood, when men enjoyed life roughly, but heartily and vigorously : times wild and picturesque, which have furnished poetry with its richest materials, and the drama with its most attractive variety of characters and manners. The world has become more worldly. There is more of dissipation and less of enjoyment. Pleasure has expanded into a broader, but a shallower stream, and has forsaken many of those deep and quiet channels, where it flowed sweetly through the calm bosom of domestic life. Society has acquired a more enlightened and elegant tone ; but it has lost many of its strong local peculiarities, its homebred feelings, its honest fireside delights. The traditionary customs of golden-hearted antiquity, its feudal hospitalities, and lordly wassailings, have passed away with the

baronial castles and stately manor-houses in which they were celebrated. They comported with the shadowy hall, the great oaken gallery, and the tapestried parlor, but are unfitted for the light, showy saloons and gay drawing-rooms of the modern villa.

Shorn, however, as it is, of its ancient and festive honors, Christmas is still a period of delightful excitement in England. It is gratifying to see that home feeling completely aroused which holds so powerful a place in every English bosom. The preparations making on every side for the social board that is again to unite friends and kindred — the presents of good cheer passing and repassing, those tokens of regard and quickeners of kind feelings — the evergreens distributed about houses and churches, emblems of peace and gladness — all these have the most pleasing effect in producing fond associations, and kindling benevolent sympathies. Even the sound of the Waits, rude as may be their minstrelsy, breaks upon the midwatches of a winter night with the effect of perfect harmony. As I have been awakened by them in that still and solemn hour “when deep sleep falleth upon man,” I have listened with a hushed delight, and connecting them with the sacred and joyous occasion, have almost fancied them into another celestial choir, announcing peace and good-will to mankind. How delightfully the imagination, when wrought upon by

these moral influences, turns everything to melody and beauty ! The very crowing of the cock, heard sometimes in the profound repose of the country, "telling the nightwatches to his feathery dames," was thought by the common people to announce the approach of the sacred festival : —

"Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth was celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long :
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad ;
The nights are wholesome — then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the time."

Hamlet, I., i., 158-164.

Amidst the general call to happiness, the bustle of the spirits, and stir of the affections, which prevail at this period, what bosom can remain insensible ? It is, indeed, the season of regenerated feeling — the season for kindling not merely the fire of hospitality in the hall, but the genial flame of charity in the heart. The scene of early love again rises green to memory beyond the sterile waste of years, and the idea of home, fraught with the fragrance of home-dwelling joys, reanimates the drooping spirit, as the Arabian breeze will sometimes waft the freshness of the distant fields to the weary pilgrim of the desert.

Stranger and sojourner as I am in the land — though for me no social hearth may blaze, no hospitable roof throw open its doors, nor the

warm grasp of friendship welcome me at the threshold — yet I feel the influence of the season beaming into my soul from the happy looks of those around me. Surely happiness is reflective, like the light of heaven; and every countenance bright with smiles, and glowing with innocent enjoyment, is a mirror transmitting to others the rays of a supreme and ever shining benevolence. He who can turn churlishly away from contemplating the felicity of his fellow-beings, and can sit down darkling and repining in his loneliness when all around is joyful, may have his moments of strong excitement and selfish gratification, but he wants the genial and social sympathies which constitute the charm of a merry Christmas.

THE STAGE-COACH.

Omne bené
Sine pœnâ
Tempus est ludendi.
Venit hora
Absque morâ
Libros deponendi.¹

OLD HOLIDAY SCHOOL SONG.

IN the preceding paper, I have made some general observations on the Christmas festivities

¹ A free translation would run something as follows:—

Tasks and troubles all are done;
And the time for play,
Long delayed, is now begun:
Put the books away.

of England, and am tempted to illustrate them by some anecdotes of a Christmas passed in the country ; in perusing which, I would most courteously invite my reader to lay aside the austerity of wisdom, and to put on that genuine holiday spirit, which is tolerant of folly and anxious only for amusement.

In the course of a December tour in Yorkshire, I rode for a long distance in one of the public coaches, on the day preceding Christmas. The coach was crowded, both inside and out, with passengers, who, by their talk, seemed principally bound to the mansions of relations or friends, to eat the Christmas dinner. It was loaded also with hampers of game, and baskets and boxes of delicacies ; and hares hung dangling their long ears about the coachman's box, presents from distant friends for the impending feast. I had three fine rosy-cheeked school-boys for my fellow-passengers inside, full of the buxom health and manly spirit which I have observed in the children of this country. They were returning home for the holidays, in high glee, and promising themselves a world of enjoyment. It was delightful to hear the gigantic plans of pleasure of the little rogues, and the impracticable feats they were to perform during their six weeks' emancipation from the abhorred thralldom of book, birch, and pedagogue. They were full of the anticipations of the meeting with the family and household, down to

the very cat and dog ; and of the joy they were to give their sisters by the presents with which their pockets were crammed ; but the meeting to which they seemed to look forward with the greatest impatience was with Bantam, which I found to be a pony, and according to their talk, possessed of more virtues than any steed since the days of Bucephalus. How he could trot ! how he could run ! and then such leaps as he would take — there was not a hedge in the whole country that he could not clear.

They were under the particular guardianship of the coachman, to whom, whenever an opportunity presented, they addressed a host of questions, and pronounced him one of the best fellows in the whole world. Indeed, I could not but notice the more than ordinary air of bustle and importance of the coachman, who wore his hat a little on one side, and had a large bunch of Christmas greens stuck in the button-hole of his coat. He is always a personage full of mighty care and business ; but he is particularly so during this season, having so many commissions to execute in consequence of the great interchange of presents. And here, perhaps, it may not be unacceptable to my untraveled readers, to have a sketch that may serve as a general representation of this very numerous and important class of functionaries, who have a dress, a manner, a language, an air, peculiar to themselves, and prevalent throughout the fraternity ; so that,

wherever an English stage-coachman may be seen, he cannot be mistaken for one of any other craft or mystery.

He has commonly a broad full face, curiously mottled with red, as if the blood had been forced by hard feeding into every vessel of the skin ; he is swelled into jolly dimensions by frequent potations of malt liquors, and his bulk is still farther increased by a multiplicity of coats, in which he is buried like a cauliflower, the upper one reaching to his heels. He wears a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, a huge roll of colored handkerchief about his neck, knowingly knotted and tucked in at the bosom ; and has in summer-time a large bouquet of flowers in his button-hole, the present, most probably, of some enamored country lass. His waistcoat is commonly of some bright color, striped, and his small-clothes extend far below the knees, to meet a pair of jockey boots which reach about half-way up his legs.

All this costume is maintained with much precision ; he has a pride in having his clothes of excellent materials, and notwithstanding the seeming grossness of his appearance, there is still discernible that neatness and propriety of person, which is almost inherent in an Englishman. He enjoys great consequence and consideration along the road ; has frequent conferences with the village housewives, who look upon him as a man of great trust and dependence ; and he seems to have a

good understanding with every bright-eyed country lass. The moment he arrives where the horses are to be changed, he throws down the reins with something of an air, and abandons the cattle to the care of the hostler ; his duty being merely to drive them from one stage to another. When off the box, his hands are thrust in the pockets of his great-coat, and he rolls about the inn-yard with an air of the most absolute lordliness. Here he is generally surrounded by an admiring throng of hostlers, stable-boys, shoeblacks, and those nameless hangers-on, that infest inns and taverns, and run errands, and do all kind of odd jobs, for the privilege of battenning on the drippings of the kitchen and the leakage of the tap-room. These all look up to him as to an oracle ; treasure up his cant phrases ; echo his opinions about horses and other topics of jockey lore ; and, above all, endeavor to imitate his air and carriage. Every ragamuffin that has a coat to his back, thrusts his hands in the pockets, rolls in his gait, talks slang, and is an embryo Coachey.

Perhaps it might be owing to the pleasing serenity that reigned in my own mind, that I fancied I saw cheerfulness in every countenance throughout the journey. A stage-coach, however, carries animation always with it, and puts the world in motion as it whirls along. The horn, sounded at the entrance of a village, produces a general bustle. Some hasten forth to meet friends ;

some with bundles and bandboxes to secure places, and in the hurry of the moment can hardly take leave of the group that accompanies them. In the mean time, the coachman has a world of small commissions to execute ; sometimes he delivers a hare or pheasant ; sometimes jerks a small parcel or newspaper to the door of a public house ; and sometimes with knowing leer and words of sly import, hands to some half-blushing, half-laughing housemaid, an odd-shaped billet-doux from some rustic admirer. As the coach rattles through the village, every one runs to the window, and you have glances on every side of fresh country faces, and blooming giggling girls. At the corners are assembled juntos of village idlers and wise men, who take their stations there for the important purpose of seeing company pass : but the sagest knot is generally at the blacksmith's, to whom the passing of the coach is an event fruitful of much speculation. The smith, with the horse's heel in his lap, pauses as the vehicle whirls by ; the cyclops¹ round the anvil suspend their ringing hammers, and suffer the iron to grow cool ; and the sooty spectre in brown paper cap, laboring at the bellows, leans on the handle for a moment, and permits the asthmatic engine to heave a long-drawn sigh, while he glares through the murky smoke and sulphureous gleams of the smithy.

Perhaps the impending holiday might have

¹ The Cyclopes were the workmen of Vulcan's stithy.

given a more than usual animation to the country, for it seemed to me as if everybody was in good looks and good spirits. Game, poultry, and other luxuries of the table, were in brisk circulation in the villages; the grocers', butchers', and fruiterers' shops were thronged with customers. The housewives were stirring briskly about, putting their dwellings in order; and the glossy branches of holly, with their bright red berries, began to appear at the windows. The scene brought to mind an old writer's account of Christmas preparations. "Now capons and hens, besides turkeys, geese, and ducks, with beef and mutton, must all die—for in twelve days a multitude of people will not be fed with a little. Now plums and spice, sugar and honey, square it among pies and broth. Now or never must music be in tune, for the youth must dance and sing to get them a heat, while the aged sit by the fire. The country maid leaves half her market, and must be sent again, if she forgets a pair of cards on Christmas eve. Great is the contention of Holly and Ivy, whether master or dame wears the breeches. Dice and cards benefit the butler; and if the cook do not lack wit, he will sweetly lick his fingers."

I was roused from this fit of luxurious meditation by a shout from my little traveling companions. They had been looking out of the coach-windows for the last few miles, recognizing every tree and cottage as they approached home, and

now there was a general burst of joy — “There’s John! and there’s old Carlo! and there’s Bantam!” cried the happy little rogues, clapping their hands.

At the end of a lane, there was an old sober-looking servant in livery, waiting for them; he was accompanied by a superannuated pointer, and by the redoubtable Bantam, a little old rat of a pony, with a shaggy mane and long rusty tail, who stood dozing quietly by the road-side, little dreaming of the bustling times that awaited him.

I was pleased to see the fondness with which the little fellows leaped about the steady old footman, and hugged the pointer, who wriggled his whole body for joy. But Bantam was the great object of interest; all wanted to mount at once, and it was with some difficulty that John arranged that they should ride by turns, and the eldest should ride first.

Off they set at last; one on the pony, with the dog bounding and barking before him, and the others holding John’s hands; both talking at once and overpowering him with questions about home, and with school anecdotes. I looked after them with a feeling in which I do not know whether pleasure or melancholy predominated; for I was reminded of those days when, like them, I had neither known care nor sorrow, and a holiday was the summit of earthly felicity. We stopped a few moments afterwards, to water the horses; and on

resuming our route, a turn of the road brought us in sight of a neat country-seat. I could just distinguish the forms of a lady and two young girls in the portico, and I saw my little comrades, with Bantam, Carlo, and old John, trooping along the carriage road. I leaned out of the coach-window, in hopes of witnessing the happy meeting, but a grove of trees shut it from my sight.

In the evening we reached a village where I had determined to pass the night. As we drove into the great gateway of the inn, I saw, on one side, the light of a rousing kitchen fire beaming through a window. I entered, and admired for the hundredth time, that picture of convenience, neatness, and broad honest enjoyment, the kitchen of an English inn. It was of spacious dimensions, hung round with copper and tin vessels highly polished, and decorated here and there with a Christmas green. Hams, tongues, and flitches of bacon were suspended from the ceiling; a smoke-jack made its ceaseless clanking beside the fire-place, and a clock ticked in one corner. A well-scoured deal table extended along one side of the kitchen, with a cold round of beef, and other hearty viands, upon it, over which two foaming tankards of ale seemed mounting guard. Travelers of inferior order were preparing to attack this stout repast, whilst others sat smoking and gossiping over their ale on two high-backed, oaken settles beside the fire. Trim housemaids were hurrying backwards

and forwards, under the directions of a bustling landlady ; but still seizing an occasional moment to exchange a flippant word, and have a rallying laugh, with the group round the fire. The scene completely realized Poor Robin's humble idea of the comforts of mid-winter : —

Now trees their leafy hats do bare
To reverence Winter's silver hair ;
A handsome hostess, merry host,
A pot of ale and now a toast,
Tobacco and a good coal fire,
Are things this season doth require.¹

I had not been long at the inn, when a post-chaise drove up to the door. A young gentleman stepped out, and by the light of the lamps I caught a glimpse of a countenance which I thought I knew. I moved forward to get a nearer view, when his eye caught mine. I was not mistaken ; it was Frank Bracebridge, a sprightly, good-humored, young fellow, with whom I had once traveled on the continent. Our meeting was extremely cordial, for the countenance of an old fellow-traveler always brings up the recollection of a thousand pleasant scenes, odd adventures, and excellent jokes. To discuss all these in a transient interview at an inn, was impossible ; and finding that I was not pressed for time and was merely making a tour of observation, he insisted that I should give him a day or two at his father's country-seat,

¹ Poor Robin's Almanack, 1694.

to which he was going to pass the holidays, and which lay at a few miles' distance. "It is better than eating a solitary Christmas dinner at an inn," said he, "and I can assure you of a hearty welcome, in something of the old-fashioned style." His reasoning was cogent, and I must confess the preparation I had seen for universal festivity and social enjoyment, had made me feel a little impatient of my loneliness. I closed, therefore, at once, with his invitation; the chaise drove up to the door, and in a few moments I was on my way to the family mansion of the Bracebridges.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Saint Francis and Saint Benedight
Blesse this house from wicked wight ;
From the night-mare and the goblin,
That is hight good fellow Robin ;
Keep it from all evil spirits,
Fairies, weasels, rats, and ferrets :
From curfew-time
To the next prime.

CARTWRIGHT.

It was a brilliant moonlight night, but extremely cold; our chaise whirled rapidly over the frozen ground; the post-boy smacked his whip incessantly, and a part of the time his horses were on a gallop. "He knows where he is going," said my companion, laughing, "and is eager to

arrive in time for some of the merriment and good cheer of the servants' hall. My father, you must know, is a bigoted devotee of the old school, and prides himself upon keeping up something of old English hospitality. He is a tolerable specimen of what you will rarely meet with nowadays in its purity, — the old English country gentleman; for our men of fortune spend so much of their time in town, and fashion is carried so much into the country, that the strong rich peculiarities of ancient rural life are almost polished away. My father, however, from early years, took honest Peacham¹ for his text-book, instead of Chesterfield; he determined in his own mind, that there was no condition more truly honorable and enviable than that of a country gentleman on his paternal lands, and, therefore, passes the whole of his time on his estate. He is a strenuous advocate for the revival of the old rural games and holiday observances, and is deeply read in the writers, ancient and modern, who have treated on the subject. Indeed, his favorite range of reading is among the authors who flourished at least two centuries since; who, he insists, wrote and thought more like true Englishmen than any of their successors. He even regrets sometimes that he had not been born a few centuries earlier, when England was itself, and had its peculiar manners and customs. As he lives at some distance from the

¹ Peacham's "Complete Gentleman," 1622.

main road, in rather a lonely part of the country, without any rival gentry near him, he has that most enviable of all blessings to an Englishman, an opportunity of indulging the bent of his own humor without molestation. Being representative of the oldest family in the neighborhood, and a great part of the péasantry being his tenants, he is much looked up to, and, in general, is known simply by the appellation of 'The 'Squire'; a title which has been accorded to the head of the family since time immemorial. I think it best to give you these hints about my worthy old father, to prepare you for any little eccentricities that might otherwise appear absurd."

We had passed for some time along the wall of a park, and at length the chaise stopped at the gate. It was in a heavy magnificent old style, of iron bars, fancifully wrought at top into flourishes and flowers. The huge square columns that supported the gate were surmounted by the family crest. Close adjoining was the porter's lodge, sheltered under dark fir trees, and almost buried in shrubbery.

The post-boy rang a large porter's bell, which resounded through the still frosty air, and was answered by the distant barking of dogs, with which the mansion-house seemed garrisoned. An old woman immediately appeared at the gate. As the moonlight fell strongly upon her, I had a full view of a little primitive dame, dressed very

much in antique taste, with a neat kerchief and stomacher, and her silver hair peeping from under a cap of snowy whiteness. She came courtesying forth with many expressions of simple joy at seeing her young master. Her husband, it seemed, was up at the house, keeping Christmas eve in the servants' hall ; they could not do without him, as he was the best hand at a song and story in the household.

My friend proposed that we should alight, and walk through the park to the Hall, which was at no great distance, while the chaise should follow on. Our road wound through a noble avenue of trees, among the naked branches of which the moon glittered as she rolled through the deep vault of a cloudless sky. The lawn beyond was sheeted with a slight covering of snow, which here and there sparkled as the moon-beams caught a frosty crystal ; and at a distance might be seen a thin transparent vapor, stealing up from the low grounds, and threatening gradually to shroud the landscape.

My companion looked round him with transport : — “ How often,” said he, “ have I scampered up this avenue, on returning home on school vacations ! How often have I played under these trees when a boy ! I feel a degree of filial reverence for them, as we look up to those who have cherished us in childhood. My father was always scrupulous in exacting our holidays, and having us

around him on family festivals. He used to direct and superintend our games with the strictness that some parents do the studies of their children. He was very particular that we should play the old English games according to their original form ; and consulted old books for precedent and authority for every ' merrie disport ' ; yet, I assure you, there never was pedantry so delightful. It was the policy of the good old gentleman to make his children feel that home was the happiest place in the world, and I value this delicious home-feeling as one of the choicest gifts a parent could bestow."

We were interrupted by the clamor of a troop of dogs of all sorts and sizes, " mongrel, puppy, whelp and hound, and curs of low degree," that, disturbed by the ringing of the porter's bell and the rattling of the chaise, came bounding open-mouthed across the lawn.

"—— The little dogs and all,

Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me !"

cried Bracebridge, laughing. At the sound of his voice, the bark was changed into a yelp of delight, and in a moment he was surrounded and almost overpowered by the caresses of the faithful animals.

We had now come in full view of the old family mansion, partly thrown in deep shadow, and partly lit up by the cold moonshine. It was an irregular building of some magnitude, and seemed to be of

the architecture of different periods. One wing was evidently very ancient, with heavy stone-shafted bow windows jutting out and overrun with ivy, from among the foliage of which the small diamond-shaped panes of glass glittered with the moon-beams. The rest of the house was in the French taste of Charles the Second's time, having been repaired and altered, as my friend told me, by one of his ancestors, who returned with that monarch at the Restoration. The grounds about the house were laid out in the old formal manner of artificial flower-beds, clipped shrubberies, raised terraces, and heavy stone balustrades, ornamented with urns, a leaden statue or two, and a jet of water. The old gentleman, I was told, was extremely careful to preserve this obsolete finery in all its original state. He admired this fashion in gardening ; it had an air of magnificence, was courtly and noble, and befitting good old family style. The boasted imitation of nature and modern gardening had sprung up with modern republican notions, but did not suit a monarchical government ; it smacked of the leveling system. I could not help smiling at this introduction of politics into gardening, though I expressed some apprehension that I should find the old gentleman rather intolerant in his creed. Frank assured me, however, that it was almost the only instance in which he had ever heard his father meddle with politics ; and he believed he had got

this notion from a member of Parliament, who once passed a few weeks with him. The 'Squire was glad of any argument to defend his clipped yew trees and formal terraces, which had been occasionally attacked by modern landscape gardeners.

As we approached the house, we heard the sound of music, and now and then a burst of laughter, from one end of the building. This, Bracebridge said, must proceed from the servants' hall, where a great deal of revelry was permitted, and even encouraged, by the 'Squire, throughout the twelve days of Christmas; provided every thing was done conformably to ancient usage. Here were kept up the old games of hoodman blind, shoe the wild mare, hot cockles, steal the white loaf, bob-apple, and snap-dragon; the Yule clog, and Christmas candle, were regularly burnt, and the mistletoe, with its white berries, hung up, to the imminent peril of all the pretty housemaids.¹

So intent were the servants upon their sports, that we had to ring repeatedly before we could make ourselves heard. On our arrival being announced, the 'Squire came out to receive us, accompanied by his two other sons: one a young officer in the army, home on leave of absence;

¹The mistletoe is still hung up in farm-houses and kitchens, at Christmas; and the young men have the privilege of kissing the girls under it, plucking each time a berry from the bush. When the berries are all plucked, the privilege ceases. — IRVING'S NOTE.

the other an Oxonian, just from the university. The 'Squire was a fine, healthy-looking, old gentleman, with silver hair curling lightly round an open florid countenance ; in which a physiognomist, with the advantage, like myself, of a previous hint or two, might discover a singular mixture of whim and benevolence.

The family meeting was warm and affectionate ; as the evening was far advanced, the 'Squire would not permit us to change our traveling dresses, but ushered us at once to the company, which was assembled in a large, old-fashioned hall. It was composed of different branches of a numerous family connection, where there were the usual proportions of old uncles and aunts, comfortable married dames, superannuated spinsters, blooming country cousins, half-fledged striplings, and bright-eyed boarding-school hoydens. They were variously occupied : some at a round game of cards ; others conversing round the fire-place ; at one end of the hall was a group of the young folks, some nearly grown up, others of a more tender and budding age, fully engrossed by a merry game ; and a profusion of wooden horses, penny trumpets, and tattered dolls about the floor, showed traces of a troop of little fairy beings, who, having frolicked through a happy day, had been carried off to slumber through a peaceful night.

While the mutual greetings were going on between young Bracebridge and his relatives, I had

time to scan the apartment. I have called it a hall, for so it had certainly been in old times, and the 'Squire had evidently endeavored to restore it to something of its primitive state. Over the heavy projecting fire-place was suspended a picture of a warrior in armor, standing by a white horse, and on the opposite wall hung a helmet, buckler, and lance. At one end an enormous pair of antlers were inserted in the wall, the branches serving as hooks on which to suspend hats, whips, and spurs ; and in the corners of the apartment were fowling-pieces, fishing-rods, and other sporting implements. The furniture was of the cumbersome workmanship of former days, though some articles of modern convenience had been added, and the oaken floor had been carpeted ; so that the whole presented an odd mixture of parlor and hall.

The grate had been removed from the wide overwhelming fire-place, to make way for a fire of wood, in the midst of which was an enormous log, glowing and blazing, and sending forth a vast volume of light and heat ; this I understood was the yule clog, which the 'Squire was particular in having brought in and illumined on a Christmas eve, according to ancient custom.¹

¹The *yule clog* is a great log of wood, sometimes the root of a tree, brought into the house with great ceremony, on Christmas eve, laid in the fire-place, and lighted with the brand of last year's clog. While it lasted, there were great drinking, singing, and telling of tales. Sometimes it was accompanied by Christmas candles ;

It was really delightful to see the old 'Squire, seated in his hereditary elbow-chair, by the hospitable fireside of his ancestors, and looking around him like the sun of a system, beaming warmth and gladness to every heart. Even the very dog that lay stretched at his feet, as he lazily shifted his position and yawned, would look fondly up in his master's face, wag his tail against the floor, and stretch himself again to sleep, confident of kindness and protection. There is an emanation from the heart in genuine hospitality, which cannot be described, but is immediately felt, and puts the stranger at once at his ease. I had not been seated many minutes by the comfortable hearth of the worthy old cavalier, before I found myself as much at home as if I had been one of the family.

Supper was announced shortly after our arrival.

but in the cottages, the only light was from the ruddy blaze of the great wood fire. The yule clog was to burn all night ; if it went out, it was considered a sign of ill luck.

Herrick mentions it in one of his songs : —

Come bring with a noise,
My merrie, merrie boys,
The Christmas log to the firing ;
While my good dame she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your hearts desiring.

The yule clog is still burnt in many farm-houses and kitchens in England, particularly in the north ; and there are several superstitions connected with it among the peasantry. If a squinting person come to the house while it is burning, or a person barefooted, it is considered an ill omen. The brand remaining from the yule clog is carefully put away to light the next year's Christmas fire.

IRVING'S NOTE.

It was served up in a spacious oaken chamber, the panels of which shone with wax, and around which were several family portraits decorated with holly and ivy. Beside the accustomed lights, two great wax tapers, called Christmas candles, wreathed with greens, were placed on a highly polished beaufet among the family plate. The table was abundantly spread with substantial fare; but the 'Squire made his supper of frumenty, a dish made of wheat cakes boiled in milk with rich spices, being a standing dish in old times for Christmas eve. I was happy to find my old friend, mince-pie, in the retinue of the feast; and finding him to be perfectly orthodox, and that I need not be ashamed of my predilection, I greeted him with all the warmth wherewith we usually greet an old and very genteel acquaintance.

The mirth of the company was greatly promoted by the humors of an eccentric personage whom Mr. Bracebridge always addressed with the quaint appellation of Master Simon. He was a tight, brisk little man, with an air of an arrant old bachelor. His nose was shaped like the bill of a parrot; his face slightly pitted with the small-pox, with a dry perpetual bloom on it, like a frost-bitten leaf in autumn. He had an eye of great quickness and vivacity, with a drollery and lurking waggery of expression that was irresistible. He was evidently the wit of the family, dealing very much in sly jokes and innuendoes with the ladies,

and making infinite merriment by harping upon old themes; which, unfortunately, my ignorance of the family chronicles did not permit me to enjoy. It seemed to be his great delight, during supper, to keep a young girl next him in a continual agony of stifled laughter, in spite of her awe of the reproving looks of her mother, who sat opposite. Indeed he was the idol of the younger part of the company, who laughed at everything he said or did, and at every turn of his countenance. I could not wonder at it; for he must have been a miracle of accomplishments in their eyes. He could imitate Punch and Judy; make an old woman of his hand, with the assistance of a burnt cork and pocket-handkerchief; and cut an orange into such a ludicrous caricature, that the young folks were ready to die with laughing.

I was let briefly into his history by Frank Bracebridge. He was an old bachelor, of a small independent income, which, by careful management, was sufficient for all his wants. He revolved through the family system like a vagrant comet in its orbit, sometimes visiting one branch, and sometimes another quite remote, as is often the case with gentlemen of extensive connections and small fortunes in England. He had a chirping, buoyant disposition, always enjoying the present moment; and his frequent change of scene and company prevented his acquiring those rusty, unaccommodating habits, with which old bachelors

are so uncharitably charged. He was a complete family chronicle, being versed in the genealogy, history, and intermarriages of the whole house of Bracebridge, which made him a great favorite with the old folks; he was a beau of all the elder ladies and superannuated spinsters, among whom he was habitually considered rather a young fellow, and he was master of the revels among the children; so that there was not a more popular being in the sphere in which he moved, than Mr. Simon Bracebridge. Of late years, he had resided almost entirely with the 'Squire, to whom he had become a factotum, and whom he particularly delighted by jumping with his humor in respect to old times, and by having a scrap of an old song to suit every occasion. We had presently a specimen of his last-mentioned talent; for no sooner was supper removed, and spiced wines and other beverages peculiar to the season introduced, than Master Simon was called on for a good old Christmas song. He bethought himself for a moment, and then, with a sparkle of the eye, and a voice that was by no means bad, excepting that it ran occasionally into a falsetto, like the notes of a split reed, he wavered forth a quaint old ditty:—

Now Christmas is come,
Let us beat up the drum,
And call all our neighbors together:
And when they appear,
Let us make such a cheer,
As will keep out the wind and the weather, etc.

The supper had disposed every one to gayety, and an old harper was summoned from the servants' hall, where he had been strumming all the evening, and to all appearance comforting himself with some of the 'Squire's home-brewed. He was a kind of hanger-on, I was told, of the establishment, and though ostensibly a resident of the village, was oftener to be found in the 'Squire's kitchen than his own home; the old gentleman being fond of the sound of "harp in hall."

The dance, like most dances after supper, was a merry one: some of the older folks joined in it, and the 'Squire himself figured down several couple with a partner with whom he affirmed that he had danced at every Christmas for nearly half a century. Master Simon, who seemed to be a kind of connecting link between the old times and the new, and to be withal a little antiquated in the taste of his accomplishments, evidently piqued himself on his dancing, and was endeavoring to gain credit by the heel and toe, rigadon, and other graces of the ancient school: but he had unluckily assorted himself with a little romping girl from boarding-school, who, by her wild vivacity, kept him continually on the stretch, and defeated all his sober attempts at elegance:—such are the ill-sorted matches to which antique gentlemen are unfortunately prone!

The young Oxonian, on the contrary, had led out

one of his maiden aunts, on whom the rogue played a thousand little knaveries with impunity ; he was full of practical jokes, and his delight was to tease his aunts and cousins ; yet, like all madcap youngsters, he was a universal favorite among the women. The most interesting couple in the dance was the young officer, and a ward of the 'Squire's, a beautiful blushing girl of seventeen. From several shy glances which I had noticed in the course of the evening, I suspected there was a little kindness growing up between them ; and, indeed, the young soldier was just the hero to captivate a romantic girl. He was tall, slender, and handsome ; and, like most young British officers of late years, had picked up various small accomplishments on the continent ;—he could talk French and Italian—draw landscapes—sing very tolerably—dance divinely ; but, above all, he had been wounded at Waterloo ;—what girl of seventeen, well read in poetry and romance, could resist such a mirror of chivalry and perfection ?

The moment the dance was over, he caught up a guitar, and lolling against the old marble fireplace, in an attitude which I am half inclined to suspect was studied, began the little French air of the Troubadour. The 'Squire, however, exclaimed against having anything on Christmas eve but good old English ; upon which the young minstrel, casting up his eye for a moment, as if in an effort of memory, struck into another strain,

and with a charming air of gallantry, gave Herrick's "Night-Piece to Julia":¹—

Her eyes the glow-worm lend thee,
The shooting stars attend thee,
And the elves also,
Whose little eyes glow
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

No Will-o'-th'-Wisp mislight thee;
Nor snake or slow-worm bite thee;
But on, on thy way,
Not making a stay,
Since ghost there is none to affright thee.

Then let not the dark thee cumber;
What though the moon does slumber,
The stars of the night
Will lend thee their light,
Like tapers clear without number.

Then, Julia, let me woo thee,
Thus, thus to come unto me:
And when I shall meet
Thy silvery feet,
My soul I'll pour into thee.

The song might or might not have been intended in compliment to the fair Julia, for so I found his partner was called; she, however, was certainly unconscious of any such application; for she never looked at the singer, but kept her eyes cast upon the floor; her face was suffused, it is

¹ When Irving wrote, the poems of Herrick were less well known than now. But this is one of the most charming, and we need not grudge it space even if we know it well, nor its fellows, indeed, in the following pages.

true, with a beautiful blush, and there was a gentle heaving of the bosom, but all that was doubtless caused by the exercise of the dance: indeed, so great was her indifference, that she was amusing herself with plucking to pieces a choice bouquet of hot-house flowers, and by the time the song was concluded the nosegay lay in ruins on the floor.

The party now broke up for the night with the kind-hearted old custom of shaking hands. As I passed through the hall on my way to my chamber, the dying embers of the yule clog still sent forth a dusky glow; and had it not been the season when "no spirit dares stir abroad," I should have been half tempted to steal from my room at midnight, and peep whether the fairies might not be at their revels about the hearth.

My chamber was in the old part of the mansion, the ponderous furniture of which might have been fabricated in the days of the giants. The room was paneled, with cornices of heavy carved work, in which flowers and grotesque faces were strangely intermingled, and a row of black-looking portraits stared mournfully at me from the walls. The bed was of rich, though faded damask, with a lofty tester, and stood in a niche opposite a bow-window. I had scarcely got into bed when a strain of music seemed to break forth in the air just below the window:

I listened, and found it proceeded from a band, which I concluded to be the waits from some neighboring village. They went round the house, playing under the windows. I drew aside the curtains, to hear them more distinctly. The moonbeams fell through the upper part of the casement, partially lighting up the antiquated apartment. The sounds, as they receded, became more soft and aerial, and seemed to accord with quiet and moonlight. I listened and listened — they became more and more tender and remote, and, as they gradually died away, my head sunk upon the pillow, and I fell asleep.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Dark and dull night flie hence away,
And give the honor to this day
That sees December turned to May.

* * * * *

Why does the chilling winter's morne
Smile like a field beset with corn?
Or smell like to a meade new-shorne,
Thus on a sudden? — come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be.

HERRICK.

WHEN I woke the next morning, it seemed as if all the events of the preceding evening had been a dream, and nothing but the identity of the ancient chamber convinced me of their reality. While I lay musing on my pillow, I heard

the sound of little feet pattering outside of the door, and a whispering consultation. Presently a choir of small voices chanted forth an old Christmas carol, the burden of which was —

Rejoice, our Saviour he was born
On Christmas day in the morning.

I rose softly, slipped on my clothes, opened the door suddenly, and beheld one of the most beautiful little fairy groups that a painter could imagine. It consisted of a boy and two girls, the eldest not more than six, and lovely as seraphs. They were going the rounds of the house, singing at every chamber door, but my sudden appearance frightened them into mute bashfulness. They remained for a moment playing on their lips with their fingers, and now and then stealing a shy glance from under their eyebrows, until, as if by one impulse, they scampered away, and as they turned an angle of the gallery, I heard them laughing in triumph at their escape.

Everything conspired to produce kind and happy feelings, in this stronghold of old-fashioned hospitality. The window of my chamber looked out upon what in summer would have been a beautiful landscape. There was a sloping lawn, a fine stream winding at the foot of it, and a tract of park beyond, with noble clumps of trees, and herds of deer. At a distance was a neat hamlet, with the smoke from the cottage chimneys hanging over it; and a church, with its

dark spire in strong relief against the clear cold sky. The house was surrounded with evergreens, according to the English custom, which would have given almost an appearance of summer; but the morning was extremely frosty; the light vapor of the preceding evening had been precipitated by the cold, and covered all the trees and every blade of grass with its fine crystallizations. The rays of a bright morning sun had a dazzling effect among the glittering foliage. A robin perched upon the top of a mountain ash, that hung its clusters of red berries just before my window, was basking himself in the sunshine, and piping a few querulous notes; and a peacock was displaying all the glories of his train, and strutting with the pride and gravity of a Spanish grandee on the terrace-walk below.

I had scarcely dressed myself, when a servant appeared to invite me to family prayers. He showed me the way to a small chapel in the old wing of the house, where I found the principal part of the family already assembled in a kind of gallery, furnished with cushions, hassocks, and large prayer-books; the servants were seated on benches below. The old gentleman read prayers from a desk in front of the gallery, and Master Simon acted as clerk and made the responses; and I must do him the justice to say, that he acquitted himself with great gravity and decorum.

The service was followed by a Christmas carol,

which Mr. Bracebridge himself had constructed from a poem of his favorite author, Herrick ; and it had been adapted to a church melody by Master Simon. As there were several good voices among the household, the effect was extremely pleasing ; but I was particularly gratified by the exaltation of heart, and sudden sally of grateful feeling, with which the worthy 'Squire delivered one stanza ; his eye glistening, and his voice rambling out of all the bounds of time and tune : —

“ 'Tis thou that crown'st my glittering hearth
 With guiltless mirth,
And giv'st me Wassaile bowles to drink
 Spiced to the brink :
Lord, 'tis thy plenty-dropping hand
 That soiles my land :
And giv'st me for my bushell sowne,
 Twice ten for one.”

I afterwards understood that early morning service was read on every Sunday and saint's day throughout the year, either by Mr. Bracebridge or some member of the family. It was once almost universally the case at the seats of the nobility and gentry of England, and it is much to be regretted that the custom is falling into neglect ; for the dullest observer must be sensible of the order and serenity prevalent in those households, where the occasional exercise of a beautiful form of worship in the morning gives, as it were, the key-note to every temper for the day, and attunes every spirit to harmony.

Our breakfast consisted of what the 'Squire denominated true old English fare. He indulged in some bitter lamentations over modern breakfasts of tea and toast, which he censured as among the causes of modern effeminacy and weak nerves, and the decline of old English heartiness: and though he admitted them to his table to suit the palates of his guests, yet there was a brave display of cold meats, wine, and ale, on the sideboard.

After breakfast, I walked about the grounds with Frank Bracebridge and Master Simon, or Mr. Simon, as he was called by everybody but the 'Squire. We were escorted by a number of gentlemanlike dogs, that seemed loungers about the establishment; from the frisking spaniel to the steady old stag-hound—the last of which was of a race that had been in the family time out of mind—they were all obedient to a dog-whistle which hung to Master Simon's button-hole, and in the midst of their gambols would glance an eye occasionally upon a small switch he carried in his hand.

The old mansion had a still more venerable look in the yellow sunshine than by pale moonlight; and I could not but feel the force of the 'Squire's idea, that the formal terraces, heavily molded balustrades, and clipped yew trees, carried with them an air of proud aristocracy.

There appeared to be an unusual number of peacocks about the place, and I was making some

remarks upon what I termed a flock of them that were basking under a sunny wall, when I was gently corrected in my phraseology by Master Simon, who told me that according to the most ancient and approved treatise on hunting, I must say a *muster* of peacocks. "In the same way," added he, with a slight air of pedantry, "we say a flight of doves or swallows, a bevy of quails, a herd of deer, or wrens, or cranes, a skulk of foxes, or a building of rooks." He went on to inform me that, according to Sir Anthony Fitzherbert, we ought to ascribe to this bird "both understanding and glory ; for, being praised, he will presently set up his tail, chiefly against the sun, to the intent you may the better behold the beauty thereof. But at the fall of the leaf, when his tail falleth, he will mourn and hide himself in corners, till his tail come again as it was."

I could not help smiling at this display of small erudition on so whimsical a subject ; but I found that the peacocks were birds of some consequence at the Hall ; for Frank Bracebridge informed me that they were great favorites with his father, who was extremely careful to keep up the breed, partly because they belonged to chivalry, and were in great request at the stately banquets of the olden time ; and partly because they had a pomp and magnificence about them highly becoming an old family mansion. Nothing, he was accustomed to say, had an air of greater state and dignity, than

a peacock perched upon an antique stone balustrade.

Master Simon had now to hurry off, having an appointment at the parish church with the village choristers, who were to perform some music of his selection. There was something extremely agreeable in the cheerful flow of animal spirits of the little man ; and I confess that I had been somewhat surprised at his apt quotations from authors who certainly were not in the range of everyday reading. I mentioned this last circumstance to Frank Bracebridge, who told me with a smile that Master Simon's whole stock of erudition was confined to some half a dozen old authors, which the 'Squire had put into his hands, and which he read over and over, whenever he had a studious fit ; as he sometimes had on a rainy day, or a long winter evening. Sir Anthony Fitzherbert's *Book of Husbandry* ; Markham's *Country Contentments* ; the *Tretyse of Hunting*, by Sir Thomas Cockayne, Knight ; Isaac Walton's *Angler*, and two or three more such ancient worthies of the pen, were his standard authorities ; and, like all men who know but a few books, he looked up to them with a kind of idolatry, and quoted them on all occasions. As to his songs, they were chiefly picked out of old books in the 'Squire's library, and adapted to tunes that were popular among the choice spirits of the last century. His practical application of scraps of literature, however, had caused him to

be looked upon as a prodigy of book-knowledge by all the grooms, huntsmen, and small sportsmen of the neighborhood.

While we were talking, we heard the distant toll of the village bell, and I was told that the 'Squire was a little particular in having his household at church on a Christmas morning ; considering it a day of pouring out of thanks and rejoicing ; for, as old Tusser observed,—

“ At Christmas be merry, *and thankful withal,*
And feast thy good neighbors, the great with the small.”

“ If you are disposed to go to church,” said Frank Bracebridge, “ I can promise you a specimen of my cousin Simon’s musical achievements. As the church is destitute of an organ, he has formed a band from the village amateurs, and established a musical club for their improvement ; he has also sorted a choir, as he sorted my father’s pack of hounds, according to the directions of Jervaise Markham, in his *Country Contentments* ; for the bass he has sought out all the ‘ deep, solemn mouths,’ and for the tenor the ‘ loud ringing mouths,’ among the country bumpkins ; and for ‘ sweet mouths,’ he has culled with curious taste among the prettiest lassies in the neighborhood ; though these last, he affirms, are the most difficult to keep in tune ; your pretty female singer being exceedingly wayward and capricious, and very liable to accident.”

As the morning, though frosty, was remarkably

fine and clear, the most of the family walked to the church, which was a very old building of gray stone, and stood near a village, about half a mile from the park gate. Adjoining it was a low snug parsonage, which seemed coeval with the church. The front of it was perfectly matted with a yew tree that had been trained against its walls, through the dense foliage of which, apertures had been formed to admit light into the small antique lattices. As we passed this sheltered nest, the parson issued forth and preceded us.

I had expected to see a sleek well-conditioned pastor, such as is often found in a snug living in the vicinity of a rich patron's table, but I was disappointed. The parson was a little meagre, black-looking man, with a grizzled wig that was too wide, and stood off from each ear ; so that his head seemed to have shrunk away within it, like a dried filbert in its shell. He wore a rusty coat, with great skirts, and pockets that would have held the church Bible and prayer-book : and his small legs seemed still smaller, from being planted in large shoes, decorated with enormous buckles.

I was informed by Frank Bracebridge that the parson had been a chum of his father's at Oxford, and had received this living shortly after the latter had come to his estate. He was a complete black-letter hunter, and would scarcely read a work printed in the Roman character. The editions of Caxton and Wynkin de Worde were his

delight ; and he was indefatigable in his researches after such old English writers as have fallen into oblivion from their worthlessness. In deference, perhaps, to the notions of Mr. Bracebridge, he had made diligent investigations into the festive rites and holiday customs of former times ; and had been as zealous in the inquiry, as if he had been a boon companion ; but it was merely with that plodding spirit with which men of adust temperament follow up any track of study, merely because it is denominated learning ; indifferent to its intrinsic nature, whether it be the illustration of the wisdom, or of the ribaldry and obscenity of antiquity. He had pored over these old volumes so intensely, that they seemed to have been reflected into his countenance ; which, if the face be indeed an index of the mind, might be compared to a title-page of black-letter.

On reaching the church-porch, we found the parson rebuking the gray-headed sexton for having used mistletoe among the greens with which the church was decorated. It was, he observed, an unholy plant, profaned by having been used by the Druids in their mystic ceremonies ; and though it might be innocently employed in the festive ornamenting of halls and kitchens, yet it had been deemed by the Fathers of the Church as unhallowed, and totally unfit for sacred purposes. So tenacious was he on this point, that the poor sexton was obliged to strip down a great part of the humble

trophies of his taste, before the parson would consent to enter upon the service of the day.

The interior of the church was venerable, but simple; on the walls were several mural monuments of the Bracebridges, and just beside the altar, was a tomb of ancient workmanship, on which lay the effigy of a warrior in armor, with his legs crossed, a sign of his having been a crusader. I was told it was one of the family who had signalized himself in the Holy Land, and the same whose picture hung over the fire-place in the hall.

During service, Master Simon stood up in the pew, and repeated the responses very audibly; evincing that kind of ceremonious devotion punctually observed by a gentleman of the old school, and a man of old family connections. I observed, too, that he turned over the leaves of a folio prayer-book with something of a flourish, possibly to show off an enormous seal-ring which enriched one of his fingers, and which had the look of a family relic. But he was evidently most solicitous about the musical part of the service, keeping his eye fixed intently on the choir, and beating time with much gesticulation and emphasis.

The orchestra was in a small gallery, and presented a most whimsical grouping of heads, piled one above the other, among which I particularly noticed that of the village tailor, a pale fellow with a retreating forehead and chin, who played on the clarionet, and seemed to have blown his

face to a point ; and there was another, a short, pursy man, stooping and laboring at a bass viol, so as to show nothing but the top of a round bald head, like the egg of an ostrich. There were two or three pretty faces among the female singers, to which the keen air of a frosty morning had given a bright rosy tint : but the gentlemen choristers had evidently been chosen, like old Cremona fiddles, more for tone than looks ; and as several had to sing from the same book, there were clusterings of odd physiognomies, not unlike those groups of cherubs we sometimes see on country tombstones.

The usual services of the choir were managed tolerably well, the vocal parts generally lagging a little behind the instrumental, and some loitering fiddler now and then making up for lost time by traveling over a passage with prodigious celerity, and clearing more bars than the keenest fox-hunter, to be in at the death. But the great trial was an anthem that had been prepared and arranged by Master Simon, and on which he had founded great expectation. Unluckily there was a blunder at the very outset — the musicians became flurried ; Master Simon was in a fever ; everything went on lamely and irregularly, until they came to a chorus beginning, “Now let us sing with one accord,” which seemed to be a signal for parting company : all became discord and confusion ; each shifted for himself, and got to the end as well, or, rather, as soon as he could ; excepting one old

chorister, in a pair of horn spectacles bestriding and pinching a long sonorous nose ; who, happening to stand a little apart, and being wrapped up in his own melody, kept on a quavering course, wriggling his head, ogling his book, and winding all up by a nasal solo of at least three bars' duration.

The parson gave us a most erudite sermon on the rites and ceremonies of Christmas, and the propriety of observing it, not merely as a day of thanksgiving, but of rejoicing ; supporting the correctness of his opinions by the earliest usages of the church, and enforcing them by the authorities of Theophilus of Cesarea, St. Cyprian, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and a cloud more of Saints and Fathers, from whom he made copious quotations. I was a little at a loss to perceive the necessity of such a mighty array of forces to maintain a point which no one present seemed inclined to dispute ; but I soon found that the good man had a legion of ideal adversaries to contend with ; having, in the course of his researches on the subject of Christmas, got completely embroiled in the sectarian controversies of the Revolution, when the Puritans made such a fierce assault upon the ceremonies of the church, and poor old Christmas was driven out of the land by proclamation of Parliament.¹ The worthy parson lived

¹ From the "Flying Eagle," a small Gazette, published December 24th, 1652 — "The House spent much time this day about the

but with times past, and knew but little of the present.

Shut up among worm-eaten tomes in the retirement of his antiquated little study, the pages of old times were to him as the gazettes of the day ; while the era of the Revolution was mere modern history. He forgot that nearly two centuries had elapsed since the fiery persecution of poor mincepie throughout the land ; when plum porridge was denounced as "mere popery," and roast beef as anti-christian ; and that Christmas had been brought in again triumphantly with the merry court of King Charles at the Restoration. He kindled into warmth with the ardor of his contest, and the host of imaginary foes with whom he had to combat ; he had a stubborn conflict with old Prynne and two or three other forgotten champions of the Round Heads, on the subject of Christmas festivity ; and concluded by urging his hearers, in the most solemn and affecting manner, to stand to the traditional customs of their

business of the Navy, for settling the affairs at sea, and before they rose, were presented with a terrible remonstrance against Christmas day, grounded upon divine Scriptures, 2 Cor. v. 16., 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17 ; and in honour of the Lord's Day, grounded upon these Scriptures, John xx. 1., Rev. i. 10., Psalms, cxviii. 24., Lev. xx. iii. 7, 11., Mark, xv. 8., Psalms, lxxxiv. 10 ; in which Christmas is called Anti-christ's masse, and those Masse-mongers and Papists who observe it, &c. In consequence of which Parliament spent some time in consultation about the abolition of Christmas day, passed orders to that effect, and resolved to sit on the following day which was commonly called Christmas day." — IRVING'S NOTE.

fathers, and feast and make merry on this joyful anniversary of the church.

I have seldom known a sermon attended apparently with more immediate effects; for on leaving the church, the congregation seemed one and all possessed with the gayety of spirit so earnestly enjoined by their pastor. The elder folks gathered in knots in the churchyard, greeting and shaking hands; and the children ran about crying, "Ule! Ule!" and repeating some uncouth rhymes,¹ which the parson, who had joined us, informed me, had been handed down from days of yore. The villagers doffed their hats to the 'Squire as he passed, giving him the good wishes of the season with every appearance of heartfelt sincerity, and were invited by him to the hall, to take something to keep out the cold of the weather; and I heard blessings uttered by several of the poor, which convinced me that, in the midst of his enjoyments, the worthy old cavalier had not forgotten the true Christmas virtue of charity.

On our way homeward, his heart seemed overflowing with generous and happy feelings. As we passed over a rising ground which commanded something of a prospect, the sounds of rustic merriment now and then reached our ears; the 'Squire paused for a few moments, and looked

¹ "Ule! Ule!

Three puddings in a pule;
Crack nuts and cry ule!"

around with an air of inexpressible benignity. The beauty of the day was, of itself, sufficient to inspire philanthropy. Notwithstanding the frostiness of the morning, the sun in his cloudless journey had acquired sufficient power to melt away the thin covering of snow from every southern declivity, and to bring out the living green which adorns an English landscape even in mid-winter. Large tracts of smiling verdure, contrasted with the dazzling whiteness of the shaded slopes and hollows. Every sheltered bank, on which the broad rays rested, yielded its silver rill of cold and limpid water, glittering through the dripping grass; and sent up slight exhalations to contribute to the thin haze that hung just above the surface of the earth. There was something truly cheering in this triumph of warmth and verdure over the frosty thralldom of winter; it was, as the Squire observed, an emblem of Christmas hospitality, breaking through the chills of ceremony and selfishness, and thawing every heart into a flow. He pointed with pleasure to the indications of good cheer reeking from the chimneys of the comfortable farm-houses, and low thatched cottages. "I love," said he, "to see this day well kept by rich and poor; it is a great thing to have one day in the year, at least, when you are sure of being welcome wherever you go, and of having, as it were, the world all thrown open to you; and I am almost disposed to join

with poor Robin, in his malediction on every churlish enemy to this honest festival:—

“ ‘ Those who at Christmas do repine,
And would fain hence dispatch him,
May they with old duke Humphry dine,
Or else may 'Squire Ketch catch 'em. ’ ”

The 'Squire went on to lament the deplorable decay of the games and amusements which were once prevalent at this season among the lower orders, and countenanced by the higher; when the old halls of castles and manor-houses were thrown open at day-light; when the tables were covered with brawn, and beef, and humming ale; when the harp and the carol resounded all day long, and when rich and poor were alike welcome to enter and make merry.¹ “ Our old games and local customs,” said he, “ had a great effect in making the peasant fond of his home, and the promotion of them by the gentry made him fond of his lord. They made the times merrier, and kinder, and better, and I can truly say with one of our old poets : —

¹ “ An English gentleman at the opening of the great day, *i.e.* on Christmas day in the morning, had all his tenants and neighbors enter his hall by day-break. The strong beer was broached, and the black jacks went plentifully about with toast, sugar, and nutmeg and good Cheshire cheese. The Hackin (the great sausage) must be boiled by day-break, or else two young men must take the maiden (*i.e.* the cook) by the arms and run her round the market place till she is shamed of her laziness.” — *Round about our Sea-Coal Fire*; IRVING'S NOTE.

“I like them well — the curious preciseness
And all-pretended gravity of those
That seek to banish hence these harmless sports,
Have thrust away much ancient honesty.”

“The nation,” continued he, “is altered ; we have almost lost our simple true-hearted peasantry. They have broken asunder from the higher classes, and seem to think their interests are separate. They have become too knowing, and begin to read newspapers, listen to alehouse politicians, and talk of reform. I think one mode to keep them in good humor in these hard times, would be for the nobility and gentry to pass more time on their estates, mingle more among the country people, and set the merry old English games going again.”

Such was the good 'Squire's project for mitigating public discontent : and, indeed, he had once attempted to put his doctrine in practice, and a few years before had kept open house during the holidays in the old style. The country people, however, did not understand how to play their parts in the scene of hospitality ; many uncouth circumstances occurred ; the manor was overrun by all the vagrants of the country, and more beggars drawn into the neighborhood in one week than the parish officers could get rid of in a year. Since then, he had contented himself with inviting the decent part of the neighboring peasantry to call at the Hall on Christmas day, and with distributing beef, and bread, and ale, among the

poor, that they might make merry in their own dwellings.

We had not been long home, when the sound of music was heard from a distance. A band of country lads, without coats, their shirt-sleeves fancifully tied with ribbons, their hats decorated with greens, and clubs in their hands, were seen advancing up the avenue, followed by a large number of villagers and peasantry. They stopped before the hall door, where the music struck up a peculiar air, and the lads performed a curious and intricate dance, advancing, retreating, and striking their clubs together, keeping exact time to the music ; while one, whimsically crowned with a fox's skin, the tail of which flaunted down his back, kept capering round the skirts of the dance, and rattling a Christmas-box with many antic gesticulations.

The 'Squire eyed this fanciful exhibition with great interest and delight, and gave me a full account of its origin, which he traced to the times when the Romans held possession of the island ; plainly proving that this was a lineal descendant of the sword-dance of the ancients. "It was now," he said, "nearly extinct, but he had accidentally met with traces of it in the neighborhood, and had encouraged its revival ; though, to tell the truth, it was too apt to be followed up by rough cudgel-play, and broken heads, in the evening."

After the dance was concluded, the whole party was entertained with brawn and beef, and stout home-brewed. The 'Squire himself mingled among the rustics, and was received with awkward demonstrations of deference and regard. It is true, I perceived two or three of the younger peasants, as they were raising their tankards to their mouths, when the 'Squire's back was turned, making something of a grimace, and giving each other the wink ; but the moment they caught my eye they pulled grave faces, and were exceedingly demure. With Master Simon, however, they all seemed more at their ease. His varied occupations and amusements had made him well known throughout the neighborhood. He was a visitor at every farm-house and cottage ; gossiped with the farmers and their wives ; romped with their daughters ; and, like that type of a vagrant bachelor the humble-bee, tolled the sweets from all the rosy lips of the country round.

The bashfulness of the guests soon gave way before good cheer and affability. There is something genuine and affectionate in the gayety of the lower orders, when it is excited by the bounty and familiarity of those above them ; the warm glow of gratitude enters into their mirth, and a kind word or a small pleasantry frankly uttered by a patron, gladdens the heart of the dependant more than oil and wine. When the 'Squire had retired, the merriment increased, and there was

much joking and laughter, particularly between Master Simon and a hale, ruddy-faced, white-headed farmer, who appeared to be the wit of the village ; for I observed all his companions to wait with open mouths for his retorts, and burst into a gratuitous laugh before they could well understand them.

The whole house, indeed, seemed abandoned to merriment ; as I passed to my room to dress for dinner, I heard the sound of music in a small court, and looking through a window that commanded it, I perceived a band of wandering musicians, with pan-dean pipes, and tambourine ; a pretty coquettish housemaid was dancing a jig with a smart country lad, while several of the other servants were looking on. In the midst of her sport, the girl caught a glimpse of my face at the window, and coloring up, ran off with an air of roguish affected confusion.

THE CHRISTMAS DINNER

Lo, now is come our joyful'st feast !
Let every man be jolly,
Each roome with yvie leaves is dressed,
And every post with holly.
Now all our neighbors' chimneys smoke,
And Christmas blocks are burning ;
Their ovens they with baked meats choke,
And all their spits are turning,
Without the door let sorrow lie
And if, for cold, it hap to die,
We'll bury 't in a Christmas pye,
And evermore be merry.

WITHER, *Juvenilia*.

I HAD finished my toilet, and was loitering with Frank Bracebridge in the library, when we heard a distant thwacking sound, which he informed me was a signal for the serving up of the dinner. The 'Squire kept up old customs in kitchen as well as hall ; and the rolling-pin struck upon the dresser by the cook, summoned the servants to carry in the meats.

Just in this nick the cook knocked thrice,
And all the waiters in a trice,
His summons did obey ;
Each serving man, with dish in hand,
Marched boldly up, like our train band,
Presented, and away.¹

The dinner was served up in the great hall, where the 'Squire always held his Christmas ban-

¹ Sir John Suckling: *Ballad of a Wedding*.

quet. A blazing, crackling fire of logs had been heaped on to warm the spacious apartment, and the flame went sparkling and wreathing up the wide-mouthed chimney. The great picture of the crusader and his white horse had been profusely decorated with greens for the occasion ; and holly and ivy had likewise been wreathed round the helmet and weapons on the opposite wall, which I understood were the arms of the same warrior. I must own, by the bye, I had strong doubts about the authenticity of the painting and armor as having belonged to the crusader, they certainly having the stamp of more recent days ; but I was told that the painting had been so considered time out of mind ; and that, as to the armor, it had been found in a lumber-room, and elevated to its present situation by the 'Squire, who at once determined it to be the armor of the family hero ; and as he was absolute authority on all such subjects in his own household, the matter had passed into current acceptation. A sideboard was set out just under this chivalric trophy, on which was a display of plate that might have vied (at least in variety) with Belshazzar's parade of the vessels of the temple ; "flagons, cans, cups, beakers, goblets, basins, and ewers ;" the gorgeous utensils of good companionship that had gradually accumulated through many generations of jovial housekeepers. Before these stood the two yule candles, beaming like two stars of the first magni-

tude ; other lights were distributed in branches, and the whole array glittered like a firmament of silver.

We were ushered into this banqueting scene with the sound of minstrelsy ; the old harper being seated on a stool beside the fire-place, and twanging his instrument with a vast deal more power than melody. Never did Christmas board display a more goodly and gracious assemblage of countenances ; those who were not handsome, were, at least, happy ; and happiness is a rare improver of your hard-favored visage. I always consider an old English family as well worth studying as a collection of Holbein's portraits, or Albert Durer's prints. There is much antiquarian lore to be acquired ; much knowledge of the physiognomies of former times. Perhaps it may be from having continually before their eyes those rows of old family portraits, with which the mansions of this country are stocked ; certain it is, that the quaint features of antiquity are often most faithfully perpetuated in these ancient lines ; and I have traced an old family nose through a whole picture-gallery, legitimately handed down from generation to generation, almost from the time of the Conquest. Something of the kind was to be observed in the worthy company around me. Many of their faces had evidently originated in a Gothic age, and been merely copied by succeeding generations ; and there was one little girl, in particular, of staid

demeanor, with a high Roman nose, and an antique vinegar aspect, who was a great favorite of the 'Squire's, being, as he said, a Bracebridge all over, and the very counterpart of one of his ancestors who figured in the court of Henry VIII.

The parson said grace, which was not a short familiar one, such as is commonly addressed to the Deity in these uncereemonious days; but a long, courtly, well-worded one of the ancient school. There was now a pause, as if something was expected; when suddenly the butler entered the hall with some degree of bustle; he was attended by a servant on each side with a large wax-light, and bore a silver dish, on which was an enormous pig's head, decorated with rosemary, with a lemon in its mouth, which was placed with great formality at the head of the table. The moment this pageant made its appearance, the harper struck up a flourish; at the conclusion of which the young Oxonian, on receiving a hint from the 'Squire, gave, with an air of the most comic gravity, an old carol, the first verse of which was as follows:—

Caput apri defero

Reddens laudes Domino.¹

- The boar's head in hand bring I,
With garlands gay and rosemary.
I pray you all synge merily
Qui estis in convivio.²

¹ The boar's head I bring, giving praise to the Lord.

² Who are at this banquet.

Though prepared to witness many of these little eccentricities, from being apprised of the peculiar hobby of mine host; yet, I confess, the parade with which so odd a dish was introduced somewhat perplexed me, until I gathered from the conversation of the 'Squire and the parson, that it was meant to represent the bringing in of the boar's head,—a dish formerly served up with much ceremony, and the sound of minstrelsy and song, at great tables on Christmas day. "I like the old custom," said the 'Squire, "not merely because it is stately and pleasing in itself, but because it was observed at the college at Oxford, at which I was educated. When I hear the old song chanted, it brings to mind the time when I was young and gamesome—and the noble old college hall—and my fellow-students loitering about in their black gowns; many of whom, poor lads, are now in their graves!"

The parson, however, whose mind was not haunted by such associations, and who was always more taken up with the text than the sentiment, objected to the Oxonian's version of the carol; which he affirmed was different from that sung at college. He went on, with the dry perseverance of a commentator, to give the college reading, accompanied by sundry annotations; addressing himself at first to the company at large; but finding their attention gradually diverted to other talk, and other objects, he lowered his tone as his

number of auditors diminished, until he concluded his remarks in an under voice, to a fat-headed old gentleman next him, who was silently engaged in the discussion of a huge plateful of turkey.

The table was literally loaded with good cheer, and presented an epitome of country abundance, in this season of overflowing larders. A distinguished post was allotted to "ancient sirloin," as mine host termed it; being, as he added, "the standard of old English hospitality, and a joint of goodly presence and full of expectation." There were several dishes quaintly decorated, and which had evidently something traditional in their embellishments; but about which, as I did not like to appear over-curious, I asked no questions.

I could not, however, but notice a pie, magnificently decorated with peacocks' feathers, in imitation of the tail of that bird, which overshadowed a considerable tract of the table. This, the 'Squire confessed, with some little hesitation, was a pheasant pie, though a peacock pie was certainly the most authentical; but there had been such a mortality among the peacocks this season, that he could not prevail upon himself to have one killed.¹

¹ The peacock was anciently in great demand for stately entertainments. Sometimes it was made into a pie, at one end of which the head appeared above the crust in all its plumage, with the beak richly gilt; at the other end the tail was displayed. Such pies were served up at the solemn banquets of chivalry, when Knights-errant pledged themselves to undertake any perilous enterprise, whence came the ancient oath, used by Justice Shallow, "by cock and pie."

The peacock was also an important dish for the Christmas feast;

It would be tedious, perhaps, to my wiser readers, who may not have that foolish fondness for odd and obsolete things to which I am a little given, were I to mention the other make-shifts of this worthy old humorist,¹ by which he was endeavoring to follow up, though at humble distance, the quaint customs of antiquity. I was pleased, however, to see the respect shown to his whims by his children and relatives; who, indeed, entered readily into the full spirit of them, and seemed all well versed in their parts; having doubtless been present at many a rehearsal. I was amused, too, at the air of profound gravity with which the butler and other servants executed the duties assigned them, however eccentric. They had an old-fashioned look; having, for the most part, been brought up in the household, and grown into keeping with the antiquated mansion, and the humors of its lord; and most probably looked upon all his whimsical regulations as the established laws of honorable housekeeping.

When the cloth was removed, the butler brought in a huge silver vessel, of rare and

and Massinger, in his *City Madam*, gives some idea of the extravagance with which this, as well as other dishes, was prepared for the gorgeous revels of the olden times:—

Men may talk of Country Christmasses.

Their thirty pound buttered eggs, their pies of carps' tongues;

Their pheasants drenched with ambergris: *the carcasses of three fat wethers bruised for gravy to make sauce for a single peacock!*

—IRVING'S NOTE.

¹ A man of humors or fancies.

curious workmanship, which he placed before the 'Squire. Its appearance was hailed with acclamation ; being the Wassail Bowl, so renowned in Christmas festivity. The contents had been prepared by the 'Squire himself ; for it was a beverage, in the skillful mixture of which he particularly prided himself ; alleging that it was too abstruse and complex for the comprehension of an ordinary servant. It was a potation, indeed, that might well make the heart of a toper leap within him ; being composed of the richest and raciest wines, highly spiced and sweetened, with roasted apples bobbing about the surface.¹

The old gentleman's whole countenance beamed with a serene look of indwelling delight, as he stirred this mighty bowl. Having raised it to his lips, with a hearty wish of a merry Christmas to all present, he sent it brimming round the board, for every one to follow his example according to the primitive style ; pronouncing it "the ancient

¹The Wassail Bowl was sometimes composed of ale instead of wine ; with nutmeg, sugar, toast, ginger, and roasted crabs ; in this way the nut-brown beverage is still prepared in some old families, and round the hearth of substantial farmers at Christmas. It is also called Lamb's Wool, and it is celebrated by Herrick in his *Twelfth Night* : —

Next crowne the bowle full
With gentle Lamb's Wool,
Add sugar, nutmeg, and ginger,
With store of ale too
And thus ye must doe
To make the Wassalle a swinger. — IRVING'S NOTE.

fountain of good feeling, where all hearts met together.”¹

There was much laughing and rallying, as the honest emblem of Christmas joviality circulated, and was kissed rather coyly by the ladies. But when it reached Master Simon, he raised it in both hands, and with the air of a boon companion, struck up an old Wassail Chanson : —

The brown bowle,
The merry browne bowle,
As it goes round about-a,
 Fill
 Still,
Let the world say what it will,
And drink your fill all out-a.
The deep canne,
The merry deep canne,
As thou dost freely quaff-a
 Sing
 Fling,
Be as merry as a king,
And sound a lusty laugh-a.²

Much of the conversation during dinner turned upon family topics, to which I was a stranger. There was, however, a great deal of rallying of Master Simon about some gay widow, with whom he was accused of having a flirtation. This attack

¹ “The custom of drinking out of the same cup gave place to each having his cup. When the steward came to the doore with the Wassel, he was to cry three times, *Wassel, Wassel, Wassel*, and then the chappell (chaplain) was to answer with a song.” — *Archæologia*. — IRVING.

² From Poor Robin’s Almanack. — IRVING.

was commenced by the ladies ; but it was continued throughout the dinner by the fat-headed old gentleman next the parson, with the persevering assiduity of a slow hound ; being one of these long-winded jokers, who, though rather dull at starting game, are unrivaled for their talents in hunting it down. At every pause in the general conversation, he renewed his bantering in pretty much the same terms ; winking hard at me with both eyes, whenever he gave Master Simon what he considered a home thrust. The latter, indeed, seemed fond of being teased on the subject, as old bachelors are apt to be ; and he took occasion to inform me, in an undertone, that the lady in question was a prodigiously fine woman and drove her own curri-
cle.

The dinner-time passed away in this flow of innocent hilarity, and though the old hall may have resounded in its time with many a scene of broader rout and revel, yet I doubt whether it ever witnessed more honest and genuine enjoyment. How easy it is for one benevolent being to diffuse pleasure around him ; and how truly is a kind heart a fountain of gladness, making everything in its vicinity to freshen into smiles ! The joyous disposition of the worthy 'Squire was perfectly contagious ; he was happy himself, and disposed to make all the world happy ; and the little eccentricities of his humor did but season, in a manner, the sweetness of his philanthropy.

When the ladies had retired, the conversation, as usual, became still more animated : many good things were broached which had been thought of during dinner, but which would not exactly do for a lady's ear ; and though I cannot positively affirm that there was much wit uttered, yet I have certainly heard many contests of rare wit produce much less laughter. Wit, after all, is a mighty tart, pungent ingredient, and much too acid for some stomachs ; but honest good-humor is the oil and wine of a merry meeting, and there is no jovial companionship equal to that, where the jokes are rather small, and the laughter abundant.

The 'Squire told several long stories of early college pranks and adventures, in some of which the parson had been a sharer ; though in looking at the latter, it required some effort of imagination to figure such a little dark anatomy of a man, into the perpetrator of a madcap gambol. Indeed, the two college chums presented pictures of what men may be made by their different lots in life ; the 'Squire had left the university to live lustily on his paternal domains, in the vigorous enjoyment of prosperity and sunshine, and had flourished on to a hearty and florid old age ; whilst the poor parson, on the contrary, had dried and withered away, among dusty tomes, in the silence and shadows of his study. Still there seemed to be a spark of almost extinguished fire, feebly glimmering in the bottom of his soul ; and, as the 'Squire

hinted at a sly story of the parson and a pretty milkmaid whom they once met on the banks of the Isis,¹ the old gentleman made an "alphabet of faces," which, as far as I could decipher his physiognomy, I verily believe was indicative of laughter ; — indeed, I have rarely met with an old gentleman that took absolute offense at the imputed gallantries of his youth.

I found the tide of wine and wassail fast gaining on the dry land of sober judgment. The company grew merrier and louder, as their jokes grew duller. Master Simon was in as chirping a humor as a grasshopper filled with dew ; his old songs grew of a warmer complexion, and he began to talk maudlin about the widow. He even gave a long song about the wooing of a widow, which he informed me he had gathered from an excellent black-letter work entitled "Cupid's Solicitor for Love" ; containing store of good advice for bachelors, and which he promised to lend me ; the first verse was to this effect : —

He that will woo a widow must not dally,
He must make hay while the sun doth shine,
He must not stand with her, shall I, shall I,
But boldly say, Widow, thou must be mine.

This song inspired the fat-headed old gentleman, who made several attempts to tell a rather broad story of Joe Miller, that was pat to the purpose ; but he always stuck in the middle, every-

¹ The river which flows through Oxford.

body recollecting the latter part excepting himself. The parson, too, began to show the effects of good cheer, having gradually settled down into a doze, and his wig sitting most suspiciously on one side. Just at this juncture, we were summoned to the drawing-room, and I suspect, at the private instigation of mine host, whose joviality seemed always tempered with a proper love of decorum.

After the dinner-table was removed, the hall was given up to the younger members of the family, who, prompted to all kind of noisy mirth by the Oxonian and Master Simon, made its old walls ring with their merriment, as they played at romping games. I delight in witnessing the gambols of children, and particularly at this happy holiday season, and could not help stealing out of the drawing-room on hearing one of their peals of laughter. I found them at the game of blind-man's-buff. Master Simon, who was the leader of their revels, and seemed on all occasions to fulfill the office of that ancient potentate, the Lord of Misrule,¹ was blinded in the midst of the hall. The little beings were as busy about him as the mock fairies about Falstaff; pinching him, plucking at the skirts of his coat, and tickling him with straws. One fine blue-eyed girl of about thirteen, with

¹ At Christmas there was in the Kinges house, wheresoever hee was lodged, a lorde of misrule, or mayster of merie disportes, and the like had ye in the house of every nobleman of honor, or good worshippe, were he spirituall or temporall. — Strow, quoted by IRVING.

her flaxen hair all in beautiful confusion, her frolic face in a glow, her frock half torn off her shoulders, a complete picture of a romp, was the chief tormentor; and from the slyness with which Master Simon avoided the smaller game, and hemmed this wild little nymph in corners, and obliged her to jump shrieking over chairs, I suspected the rogue of being not a whit more blinded than was convenient.

When I returned to the drawing-room, I found the company seated round the fire, listening to the parson, who was deeply ensconced in a high-backed oaken chair, the work of some cunning artificer of yore, which had been brought from the library for his particular accommodation. From this venerable piece of furniture, with which his shadowy figure and dark weazen face so admirably accorded, he was dealing forth strange accounts of the popular superstitions and legends of the surrounding country, with which he had become acquainted in the course of his antiquarian researches. I am inclined to think that the old gentleman was himself somewhat tinctured with superstition, as men are very apt to be, who live a recluse and studious life in a sequestered part of the country, and pore over black-letter tracts, so often filled with the marvelous and supernatural. He gave us several anecdotes of the fancies of the neighboring peasantry, concerning the effigy of the crusader, which lay on the tomb by the church

altar. As it was the only monument of the kind in that part of the country, it had always been regarded with feelings of superstition by the good wives of the village. It was said to get up from the tomb and walk the rounds of the churchyard in stormy nights, particularly when it thundered ; and one old woman whose cottage bordered on the churchyard, had seen it through the windows of the church, when the moon shone, slowly pacing up and down the aisles. It was the belief that some wrong had been left unredressed by the deceased, or some treasure hidden, which kept the spirit in a state of trouble and restlessness. Some talked of gold and jewels buried in the tomb, over which the specter kept watch ; and there was a story current of a sexton, in old times, who endeavored to break his way to the coffin at night ; but just as he reached it received a violent blow from the marble hand of the effigy, which stretched him senseless on the pavement. These tales were often laughed at by some of the sturdier among the rustics ; yet, when night came on, there were many of the stoutest unbelievers that were shy of venturing alone in the footpath that led across the churchyard.

From these and other anecdotes that followed, the crusader appeared to be the favorite hero of ghost stories throughout the vicinity. His picture, which hung up in the hall, was thought by the servants to have something supernatural about it :

for they remarked that, in whatever part of the hall you went, the eyes of the warrior were still fixed on you. The old porter's wife, too, at the lodge, who had been born and brought up in the family, and was a great gossip among the maid-servants, affirmed, that in her young days she had often heard say, that on Midsummer eve, when it was well known all kinds of ghosts, goblins, and fairies, become visible and walk abroad, the crusader used to mount his horse, come down from his picture, ride about the house, down the avenue, and so to the church to visit the tomb ; on which occasion the church door most civilly swung open of itself ; not that he needed it—for he rode through closed gates and even stone walls, and had been seen by one of the dairy-maids to pass between two bars of the great park gate, making himself as thin as a sheet of paper.

All these superstitions I found had been very much countenanced by the 'Squire, who though not superstitious himself, was very fond of seeing others so. He listened to every goblin tale of the neighboring gossips with infinite gravity, and held the porter's wife in high favor on account of her talent for the marvelous. He was himself a great reader of old legends and romances, and often lamented that he could not believe in them ; for a superstitious person, he thought, must live in a kind of fairy land.

Whilst we were all attention to the parson's

stories, our ears were suddenly assailed by a burst of heterogeneous sounds from the hall, in which were mingled something like the clang of rude minstrelsy, with the uproar of many small voices and girlish laughter. The door suddenly flew open, and a train came trooping into the room, that might almost have been mistaken for the breaking up of the court of Fairy. That indefatigable spirit, Master Simon, in the faithful discharge of his duties as lord of misrule, had conceived the idea of a Christmas mummary, or masking; and having called in to his assistance the Oxonian and the young officer, who were equally ripe for anything that should occasion romping and merriment, they had carried it into instant effect. The old housekeeper had been consulted; the antique clothes-presses and wardrobes rummaged, and made to yield up the relics of finery that had not seen the light for several generations: the younger part of the company had been privately convened from parlor and hall, and the whole had been bedizened out, into a burlesque imitation of an antique masque.¹

Master Simon led the van as "Ancient Christmas," quaintly appareled in a ruff, a short cloak, which had very much the aspect of one of the old

¹ Maskings or mummeries were favorite sports at Christmas, in old times, and the wardrobes at halls and manor-houses were often laid under contribution to furnish dresses and fantastic disguising. I strongly suspect Master Simon to have taken the idea of his from Ben Jonson's "Mask of Christmas."—IRVING'S NOTE.

housekeeper's petticoats, and a hat that might have served for a village steeple, and must indubitably have figured in the days of the Covenanters. From under this, his nose curved boldly forth, flushed with a frost-bitten bloom that seemed the very trophy of a December blast. He was accompanied by the blue-eyed romp, dished up as "Dame Mince Pie," in the venerable magnificence of faded brocade, long stomacher, peaked hat and high-heeled shoes. The young officer appeared as Robin Hood, in a sporting dress of Kendal green, and a foraging cap with a gold tassel.

The costume, to be sure, did not bear testimony to deep research, and there was an evident eye to the picturesque natural to a young gallant in presence of his mistress. The fair Julia hung on his arm in a pretty rustic dress, as "Maid Marian." The rest of the train had been metamorphosed in various ways; the girls trussed up in the finery of the ancient belles of the Bracebridge line, and the striplings bewhiskered with burnt cork, and gravely clad in broad skirts, hanging sleeves, and full-bottomed wigs, to represent the characters of Roast Beef, Plum Pudding, and other worthies celebrated in ancient maskings. The whole was under the control of the Oxonian, in the appropriate character of Misrule; and I observed that he exercised rather a mischievous sway with his wand over the smaller personages of the pageant.

The irruption of this motley crew, with beat of drum, according to ancient custom, was the consummation of uproar and merriment. Master Simon covered himself with glory by the stateliness with which, as Ancient Christmas, he walked a minuet with the peerless, though giggling, Dame Mince Pie. It was followed by a dance from all the characters, which, from its medley of costumes, seemed as though the old family portraits had skipped down from their frames to join in the sport. Different centuries were figuring at cross-hands and right and left; the dark ages were cutting pirouettes and rigadoons; and the days of Queen Bess, jigging merrily down the middle, through a line of succeeding generations.

The worthy 'Squire contemplated these fantastic sports, and this resurrection of his old wardrobe, with the simple relish of childish delight. He stood chuckling and rubbing his hands, and scarcely hearing a word the parson said, notwithstanding that the latter was discoursing most authentically on the ancient and stately dance of the Pavon, or peacock, from which he conceived the minuet to be derived.¹ For my part,

¹ Sir John Hawkins, speaking of the dance called the Pavon, from pavo, a peacock, says, "It is a grave and majestic dance; the method of dancing it anciently was by gentlemen dressed with caps and swords, by those of the long robe in their gowns; by the peers in their mantles, and by the ladies in gowns with long trains, the motion whereof, in dancing, resembled that of a peacock.—
"History of Music," quoted by IRVING.

I was in a continual excitement from the varied scenes of whim and innocent gayety passing before me. It was inspiring to see wild-eyed frolic and warm-hearted hospitality breaking out from among the chills and glooms of winter, and old age throwing off his apathy, and catching once more the freshness of youthful enjoyment. I felt also an interest in the scene, from the consideration that these fleeting customs were posting fast into oblivion, and that this was, perhaps, the only family in England in which the whole of them were still punctiliously observed. There was a quaintness, too, mingled with all this revelry, that gave it a peculiar zest: it was suited to the time and place; and as the old Manor-house almost reeled with mirth and wassail, it seemed echoing back the joviality of long-departed years.

But enough of Christmas and its gambols: it is time for me to pause in this garrulity. Methinks I hear the question asked by my graver readers, "To what purpose is all this—how is the world to be made wiser by this talk?" Alas! is there not wisdom enough extant for the instruction of the world? And if not, are there not thousands of abler pens laboring for its improvement?—It is so much pleasanter to please than to instruct—to play the companion rather than the preceptor.

What, after all, is the mite of wisdom that I could throw into the mass of knowledge; or how

am I sure that my sagest deductions may be safe guides for the opinions of others? But in writing to amuse, if I fail, the only evil is my own disappointment. If, however, I can by any lucky chance, in these days of evil, rub out one wrinkle from the brow of care, or beguile the heavy heart of one moment of sorrow — if I can now and then penetrate through the gathering film of misanthropy, prompt a benevolent view of human nature, and make my reader more in good humor with his fellow-beings and himself, surely, surely, I shall not then have written entirely in vain.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY¹

When I behold, with deep astonishment,
To famous Westminster how there resorte,
Living in brasse or stony monument,
The princes and the worthies of all sorte ;
Doe not I see reformde nobilitie,
Without contempt, or pride, or ostentation,
And looke upon offenseless majesty,
Naked of pomp or earthly domination ?
And how a play-game of a painted stone
Contents the quiet now and silent sprites,
Whome all the world which late they stood upon,
Could not content nor quench their appetite.

Life is a frost of cold felicitie,
And death the thaw of all our vanitie.

Christolero's Epigrams, by T. B., 1598.

¹ The student will find it curious to compare this essay with Addison's and Goldsmith's essays on the same subject in "English Essays." Perhaps they will perceive a greater earnestness and

ON one of those sober and rather melancholy days, in the latter part of autumn, when the shadows of morning and evening almost mingle together, and throw a gloom over the decline of the year, I passed several hours in rambling about Westminster Abbey. There was something congenial to the season in the mournful magnificence of the old pile; and as I passed its threshold, it seemed like stepping back into the regions of antiquity, and losing myself among the shades of former ages.

I entered from the inner court of Westminster school, through a long, low, vaulted passage, that had an almost subterranean look, being dimly lighted in one part by circular perforations in the massive walls. Through this dark avenue I had a distant view of the cloisters, with the figure of an old verger, in his black gown, moving along their shadowy vaults, and seeming like a specter from one of the neighboring tombs.

The approach to the abbey through these gloomy monastic remains, prepares the mind for its solemn contemplation. The cloister still retains something of the quiet and seclusion of former days. The gray walls are discolored by damp, and crumbling with age; a coat of hoary moss has gathered over the inscriptions of the mural monuments, and

sincerity in the words of this stranger, who yet, as it were, was visiting his old home. One should also read Thackeray's "*Nil Nisi Bonum.*"

obscured the death's heads, and other funeral emblems. The sharp touches of the chisel are gone from the rich tracery of the arches; the roses which adorned the key-stones have lost their leafy beauty; everything bears marks of the gradual dilapidations of time, which yet has something touching and pleasing in its very decay.

The sun was pouring down a yellow autumnal ray into the square of the cloisters; beaming upon a scanty plot of grass in the center, and lighting up an angle of the vaulted passage with a kind of dusty splendor. From between the arcades, the eye glanced up to a bit of blue sky, or a passing cloud; and beheld the sun-gilt pinnacles of the abbey towering into the azure heaven.

As I paced the cloisters, sometimes contemplating this mingled picture of glory and decay, and sometimes endeavoring to decipher the inscriptions on the tombstones, which formed the pavement beneath my feet, my eyes were attracted to three figures, rudely carved in relief, but nearly worn away by the footsteps of many generations. They were the effigies of three of the early abbots; the epitaphs were entirely effaced; the names alone remained, having no doubt been renewed in later times. (Vitalis. Abbas. 1082, and Gislebertus Crispinus. Abbas. 1114, and Laurentius. Abbas. 1176.) I remained some little while, musing over these casual relics of antiquity, thus left like wrecks upon this distant shore of time, telling no

tale but that such beings had been and had perished; teaching no moral but the futility of that pride which hopes still to exact homage in its ashes, and to live in an inscription. A little longer, and even these faint records will be obliterated, and the monument will cease to be a memorial. Whilst I was yet looking down upon the gravestones, I was roused by the sound of the abbey clock, reverberating from buttress to buttress, and echoing among the cloisters. It is almost startling to hear this warning of departed time sounding among the tombs, and telling the lapse of the hour, which, like a billow, has rolled us onward towards the grave. I pursued my walk to an arched door opening to the interior of the abbey. On entering here, the magnitude of the building breaks fully upon the mind, contrasted with the vaults of the cloisters. The eye gazes with wonder at clustered columns of gigantic dimensions, with arches springing from them to such an amazing height; and man wandering about their bases, shrunk into insignificance in comparison with his own handiwork. The spaciousness and gloom of this vast edifice produce a profound and mysterious awe. We step cautiously and softly about, as if fearful of disturbing the hallowed silence of the tomb; while every footfall whispers along the walls, and chatters among the sepulchers, making us more sensible of the quiet we have interrupted.

It seems as if the awful nature of the place

presses down upon the soul, and hushes the beholder into noiseless reverence. We feel that we are surrounded by the congregated bones of the great men of past times, who have filled history with their deeds, and the earth with their renown. And yet it almost provokes a smile at the vanity of human ambition, to see how they are crowded together, and jostled in the dust ; what parsimony is observed in doling out a scanty nook — a gloomy corner — a little portion of earth, to those whom, when alive, kingdoms could not satisfy : and how many shapes, and forms, and artifices, are devised to catch the casual notice of the passenger, and save from forgetfulness, for a few short years, a name which once aspired to occupy ages of the world's thought and admiration.

I passed some time in Poet's Corner, which occupies an end of one of the transepts or cross aisles of the abbey. The monuments are generally simple ; for the lives of literary men afford no striking themes for a sculptor. Shakespeare and Addison have statues erected to their memories ; but the greater part have busts, medallions, and sometimes mere inscriptions. Notwithstanding the simplicity of these memorials, I have always observed that the visitors to the abbey remain longest about them. A kinder and fonder feeling takes place of that cold curiosity or vague admiration with which they gaze on the splendid monuments of the great and the heroic. They linger

about these as about the tombs of friends and companions ; for indeed there is something of companionship between the author and the reader. Other men are known to posterity only through the medium of history, which is continually growing faint and obscure ; but the intercourse between the author and his fellow-men is ever new, active, and immediate. He has lived for them more than for himself ; he has sacrificed surrounding enjoyments, and shut himself up from the delights of social life, that he might the more intimately commune with distant minds and distant ages. Well may the world cherish his renown ; for it has been purchased, not by deeds of violence and blood, but by the diligent dispensation of pleasure. Well may posterity be grateful to his memory ; for he has left it an inheritance, not of empty names and sounding actions, but whole treasures of wisdom, bright gems of thought, and golden veins of language.

From Poet's Corner I continued my stroll towards that part of the abbey which contains the sepulchers of the kings. I wandered among what once were chapels, but which are now occupied by the tombs and monuments of the great. At every turn, I met with some illustrious name, or the cognizance of some powerful house renowned in history. As the eye darts into these dusky chambers of death, it catches glimpses of quaint effigies : some kneeling in niches, as if in

devotion ; others stretched upon the tombs, with hands piously pressed together ; warriors in armor, as if reposing after battle ; prelates, with crosiers and miters ; and nobles in robes and coronets, lying as it were in state. In glancing over this scene, so strangely populous, yet where every form is so still and silent, it seems almost as if we were treading a mansion of that fabled city, where every being had been suddenly transmuted into stone.

I paused to contemplate a tomb on which lay the effigy of a knight in complete armor. A large buckler was on one arm ; the hands were pressed together in supplication upon the breast ; the face was almost covered by the morion ; the legs were crossed in token of the warrior's having been engaged in the holy war. It was the tomb of a crusader ; of one of those military enthusiasts, who so strangely mingled religion and romance, and whose exploits form the connecting link between fact and fiction—between the history and the fairy tale. There is something extremely picturesque in the tombs of these adventurers, decorated as they are with rude armorial bearings and Gothic sculpture. They comport with the antiquated chapels in which they are generally found ; and in considering them, the imagination is apt to kindle with the legendary associations, the romantic fictions, the chivalrous pomp and pageantry, which poetry has spread over the wars for the Sepulcher of Christ. They are the relics of times

utterly gone by ; of beings passed from recollection ; of customs and manners with which ours have no affinity. They are like objects from some strange and distant land of which we have no certain knowledge, and about which all our conceptions are vague and visionary. There is something extremely solemn and awful in those effigies on Gothic tombs, extended as if in the sleep of death, or in the supplication of the dying hour. They have an effect infinitely more impressive on my feelings than the fanciful attitudes, the overwrought conceits, and allegorical groups, which abound on modern monuments. I have been struck, also, with the superiority of many of the old sepulchral inscriptions. There was a noble way, in former times, of saying things simply, and yet saying them proudly : and I do not know an epitaph that breathes a loftier consciousness of family worth and honorable lineage, than one which affirms, of a noble house, that "all the brothers were brave, and all the sisters virtuous."

In the opposite transept to Poet's Corner, stands a monument which is among the most renowned achievements of modern art ; but which, to me, appears horrible rather than sublime. It is the tomb of Mrs. Nightingale, by Roubillac. The bottom of the monument is represented as throwing open its marble doors, and a sheeted skeleton is starting forth. The shroud is falling from his fleshless frame as he launches his dart at his vic-

tim. She is sinking into her affrighted husband's arms, who strives, with vain and frantic effort, to avert the blow. The whole is executed with terrible truth and spirit; we almost fancy we hear the gibbering yell of triumph, bursting from the distended jaws of the specter. — But why should we thus seek to clothe death with unnecessary terrors, and to spread horrors round the tomb of those we love? The grave should be surrounded by everything that might inspire tenderness and veneration for the dead; or that might win the living to virtue. It is the place, not of disgust and dismay, but of sorrow and meditation.

While wandering about these gloomy vaults and silent aisles, studying the records of the dead, the sound of busy existence from without occasionally reaches the ear: the rumbling of the passing equipage; the murmur of the multitude; or perhaps the light laugh of pleasure. The contrast is striking with the deathlike repose around; and it has a strange effect upon the feelings, thus to hear the surges of active life hurrying along and beating against the very walls of the sepulcher.

I continued in this way to move from tomb to tomb, and from chapel to chapel. The day was gradually wearing away; the distant tread of loiterers about the abbey grew less and less frequent; the sweet-tongued bell was summoning to evening prayers; and I saw at a distance the

choristers, in their white surplices, crossing the aisle and entering the choir. I stood before the entrance to Henry the Seventh's chapel. A flight of steps leads up to it, through a deep and gloomy, but magnificent arch. Great gates of brass, richly and delicately wrought, turn heavily upon their hinges, as if proudly reluctant to admit the feet of common mortals into this most gorgeous of sepulchers.

On entering, the eye is astonished by the pomp of architecture, and the elaborate beauty of sculptured detail. The very walls are wrought into universal ornament, incrustated with tracery, and scooped into niches, crowded with the statues of saints and martyrs. Stone seems, by the cunning labor of the chisel, to have been robbed of its weight and density, suspended aloft, as if by magic, and the fretted roof achieved with the wonderful minuteness and airy security of a cobweb.

Along the sides of the chapel are the lofty stalls of the Knights of the Bath, richly carved of oak, though with the grotesque decorations of Gothic architecture. On the pinnacles of the stalls are affixed the helmets and crests of the knights, with their scarfs and swords; and above them are suspended their banners, emblazoned with armorial bearings, and contrasting the splendor of gold and purple and crimson, with the cold gray fretwork of the roof. In the midst of this grand mausoleum stands the sepulcher of its founder, — his effigy,

with that of his queen, extended on a sumptuous tomb, and the whole surrounded by a superbly wrought brazen railing.

There is a sad dreariness in this magnificence; this strange mixture of tombs and trophies; these emblems of living and aspiring ambition, close beside momentos which show the dust and oblivion in which all must sooner or later terminate. Nothing impresses the mind with a deeper feeling of loneliness, than to tread the silent and deserted scene of former throng and pageant. On looking round on the vacant stalls of the knights and their esquires, and on the rows of dusty but gorgeous banners that were once borne before them, my imagination conjured up the scene when this hall was bright with the valor and beauty of the land; glittering with the splendor of jeweled rank and military array; alive with the tread of many feet, and the hum of an admiring multitude. All had passed away; the silence of death had settled again upon the place; interrupted only by the casual chirping of birds, which had found their way into the chapel, and built their nests among its friezes and pendants — sure signs of solitariness and desertion. When I read the names inscribed on the banners, they were those of men scattered far and wide about the world; some tossing upon distant seas; some under arms in distant lands; some mingling in the busy intrigues of courts and cabinets; all seeking to deserve one more distinc-

tion in this mansion of shadowy honors — the melancholy reward of a monument.

Two small aisles on each side of this chapel present a touching instance of the equality of the grave, which brings down the oppressor to a level with the oppressed, and mingles the dust of the bitterest enemies together. In one is the sepulcher of the haughty Elizabeth; in the other is that of her victim, the lovely and unfortunate Mary.¹ Not an hour in the day, but some ejaculation of pity is uttered over the fate of the latter, mingled with indignation at her oppressor. The walls of Elizabeth's sepulcher continually echo with the sighs of sympathy heaved at the grave of her rival.

A peculiar melancholy reigns over the aisle where Mary lies buried. The light struggles dimly through windows darkened by dust. The greater part of the place is in deep shadow, and the walls are stained and tinted by time and weather. A marble figure of Mary is stretched upon the tomb, round which is an iron railing, much corroded, bearing her national emblem — the thistle. I was weary with wandering, and sat down to rest myself by the monument, revolving in my mind the checkered and disastrous story of poor Mary.

The sound of casual footsteps had ceased from the abbey. I could only hear, now and then, the

¹Queen of Scots.

distant voice of the priest repeating the evening service, and the faint responses of the choir ; these paused for a time, and all was hushed. The stillness, the desertion and obscurity that were gradually prevailing around, gave a deeper and more solemn interest to the place :

For in the silent grave no conversation,
No joyful tread of friends, no voice of lovers,
No careful father's counsel — nothing's heard,
For nothing is, but all oblivion,
Dust, and an endless darkness.

Suddenly the notes of the deep-laboring organ burst upon the ear, falling with doubled and redoubled intensity, and rolling, as it were, huge billows of sound. How well do their volume and grandeur accord with this mighty building ! With what pomp do they swell through its vast vaults, and breathe their awful harmony through these caves of death, and make the silent sepulcher vocal ! — And now they rise in triumphant acclamation, heaving higher and higher their accordant notes, and piling sound on sound. — And now they pause, and the soft voices of the choir break out into sweet gushes of melody ; they soar aloft, and warble along the roof, and seem to play about these lofty vaults like the pure airs of heaven. Again the pealing organ heaves its thrilling thunders, compressing air into music, and rolling it forth upon the soul. What long-drawn cadences ! What solemn sweeping concords !

It grows more and more dense and powerful — it fills the vast pile, and seems to jar the very walls — the ear is stunned — the senses are overwhelmed. And now it is winding up in full jubilee — it is rising from the earth to heaven — the very soul seems rapt away, and floated upwards on this swelling tide of harmony !

I sat for some time lost in that kind of reverie which a strain of music is apt sometimes to inspire : the shadows of evening were gradually thickening around me ; the monuments began to cast deeper and deeper gloom ; and the distant clock again gave token of the slowly waning day.

I arose, and prepared to leave the abbey. As I descended the flight of steps which lead into the body of the building, my eye was caught by the shrine of Edward the Confessor, and I ascended the small staircase that conducts to it, to take from thence a general survey of this wilderness of tombs. The shrine is elevated upon a kind of platform, and close around it are the sepulchers of various kings and queens. From this eminence the eye looks down between pillars and funeral trophies to the chapels and chambers below, crowded with tombs ; where warriors, prelates, courtiers, and statesmen, lie moldering in "their beds of darkness." Close by me stood the great chair of coronation, rudely carved of oak, in the barbarous taste of a remote and Gothic age. The scene seemed almost as if contrived, with theatri-

cal artifice, to produce an effect upon the beholder. Here was a type of the beginning and the end of human pomp and power ; here it was literally but a step from the throne to the sepulcher. Would not one think that these incongruous mementos had been gathered together as a lesson to living greatness ? — to show it, even in the moment of its proudest exaltation, the neglect and dishonor to which it must soon arrive ? how soon that crown which encircles its brow must pass away ; and it must lie down in the dust and disgraces of the tomb, and be trampled upon by the feet of the meanest of the multitude ? For, strange to tell, even the grave is here no longer a sanctuary. There is a shocking levity in some natures, which leads them to sport with awful and hallowed things ; and there are base minds, which delight to revenge on the illustrious dead the abject homage and groveling servility which they pay to the living. The coffin of Edward the Confessor has been broken open, and his remains despoiled of their funeral ornaments ; the scepter has been stolen from the hand of the imperious Elizabeth, and the effigy of Henry the Fifth lies headless. Not a royal monument but bears some proof how false and fugitive is the homage of mankind. Some are plundered, some mutilated ; some covered with ribaldry and insult — all more or less outraged and dishonored !

The last beams of day were now faintly stream-

ing through the painted windows in the high vaults above me ; the lower parts of the abbey were already wrapped in the obscurity of twilight. The chapels and aisles grew darker and darker. The effigies of the kings faded into shadows ; the marble figures of the monuments assumed strange shapes in the uncertain light ; the evening breeze crept through the aisles like the cold breath of the grave ; and even the distant footfall of a verger, traversing the Poet's Corner, had something strange and dreary in its sound. I slowly retraced my morning's walk, and as I passed out at the portal of the cloisters, the door, closing with a jarring noise behind me, filled the whole building with echoes.

I endeavored to form some arrangement in my mind of the objects I had been contemplating, but found they were already falling into indistinctness and confusion. Names, inscriptions, trophies, had all become confounded in my recollection, though I had scarcely taken my foot from off the threshold. What, thought I, is this vast assemblage of sepulchers but a treasury of humiliation ; a huge pile of reiterated homilies on the emptiness of renown, and the certainty of oblivion ? It is, indeed the empire of Death ; his great shadowy palace ; where he sits in state, mocking at the relics of human glory, and spreading dust and forgetfulness on the monuments of princes. How idle a boast, after all, is the immortality of a name !

Time is ever silently turning over his pages ; we are too much engrossed by the story of the present, to think of the characters and anecdotes that give interest to the past ; and each age is a volume thrown aside to be speedily forgotten. The idol of to-day pushes the hero of yesterday out of our recollection ; and will, in turn, be supplanted by his successor of to-morrow. " Our fathers," says Sir Thomas Brown, " find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors." History fades into fable ; fact becomes clouded with doubt and controversy ; the inscription molds from the tablet ; the statue falls from the pedestal. Columns, arches, pyramids, what are they but heaps of sand — and their epitaphs, but characters written in the dust ? What is the security of a tomb, or the perpetuity of an embalmment ? The remains of Alexander the Great have been scattered to the wind, and his empty sarcophagus is now the mere curiosity of a museum. " The Egyptian mummies, which Cambyzes or time hath spared, avarice now consumeth ; Mizraim cures wounds, and Pharaoh is sold for balsams." ¹

What then is to insure this pile, which now towers above me from sharing the fate of mightier mausoleums ? The time must come when its gilded vaults which now spring so loftily, shall lie in rubbish beneath the feet ; when instead of

¹ Sir Thomas Browne.

the sound of melody and praise, the winds shall whistle through the broken arches, and the owl hoot from the shattered tower,—when the garish sunbeam shall break into these gloomy mansions of death; and the ivy twine round the fallen columns; and the fox-glove hand its blossoms about the nameless urn, as if in mockery of the dead. Thus man passes away; his name passes from recollection; his history is a tale that is told, and his very monument becomes a ruin.

FROM "PRUE AND I"



DINNER TIME

"Within this hour it will be dinner time ;
I'll view the manners of the town,
Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings."

Comedy of Errors.

IN the warm afternoons of the early summer, it is my pleasure to stroll about Washington Square and along the Fifth Avenue,¹ at the hour when the diners-out are hurrying to the tables of the wealthy and refined. I gaze with placid delight upon the cheerful expanse of white waistcoat that illumines those streets at that hour, and mark the variety of emotions that swell beneath all that purity. A man going out to dine has a singular cheerfulness of aspect. Except for his gloves, which fit so well, and which he has carefully buttoned, that he may not make an awkward pause in the hall of his friend's house, I am sure he would search his pocket for a cent to give the wan beggar at the corner. It is impossible just now, my dear woman ; but God bless you !

¹ Fifth Avenue begins in Washington Square.

It is pleasant to consider that simple suit of black. If my man be young and only lately cognizant of the rigors of the social law, he is a little nervous at being seen in his dress suit — body coat and black trousers — before sunset. For in the last days of May the light lingers long over the freshly leaved trees in the Square, and lies warm along the Avenue. All winter the sun has not been permitted to see dresscoats. They come out only with the stars, and fade with ghosts, before the dawn. Except, haply, they be brought homeward before breakfast in an early twilight of hackney-coach. Now, in the budding and bursting summer, the sun takes his revenge, and looks aslant over the treetops and the chimneys upon the most unimpeachable garments. A cat may look upon a king.

I know my man at a distance. If I am chatting with the nursery maids around the fountain, I see him upon the broad walk of Washington Square, and detect him by the freshness of his movement, his springy gait. Then the white waistcoat flashes in the sun.

“Go on, happy youth,” I exclaim aloud, to the great alarm of the nursery maids, who suppose me to be an innocent insane person suffered to go at large, unattended — “go on, and be happy with fellow-waistcoats over fragrant wines.”

It is hard to describe the pleasure in this amiable spectacle of a man going out to dine. I, who

am a quiet family man, and take a quiet family cut at four o'clock ; or, when I am detained downtown by a false quantity in my figures, who run into Delmonico's¹ and seek comfort in a cutlet, am rarely invited to dinner, and have few white waistcoats. Indeed, my dear Prue tells me that I have but one in the world, and I often want to confront my eager young friends as they bound along, and ask abruptly, "What do you think of a man whom one white waistcoat suffices?"

By the time I have eaten my modest repast, it is the hour for the diners-out to appear. If the day is unusually soft and sunny, I hurry my simple meal a little, that I may not lose any of my favorite spectacle. Then I saunter out. If you met me you would see that I am also clad in black. But black is my natural color, so that it begets no false theories concerning my intentions. Nobody, meeting me in full black, supposes that I am going to dine out. That somber hue is professional with me. It belongs to bookkeepers as to clergymen, physicians, and undertakers. We wear it because we follow solemn callings. Saving men's bodies and souls, or keeping the machinery of business well wound, are such sad professions that it is becoming to drape dolefully those who adopt them.

I wear a white cravat, too, but nobody supposes

¹ Delmonico's has changed since it was a pleasant dining-place for elderly book-keepers.

that it is in any danger of being stained by Lafitte.¹ It is a limp cravat with a craven tie. It has none of the dazzling dash of the white that my young friends sport, or, I should say, sported ; for the white cravat is now abandoned to the somber professions of which I spoke. My young friends suspect that the flunkeys of the British noblemen wear such ties, and they have, therefore, discarded them. I am sorry to remark, also, an uneasiness, if not downright skepticism, about the white waistcoat. Will it extend to shirts, I ask myself with sorrow.

But there is something pleasanter to contemplate during these quiet strolls of mine than the men who are going to dine out, and that is, the women. They roll in carriages to the happy houses which they shall honor, and I strain my eyes in at the carriage window to see their cheerful faces as they pass. I have already dined ; upon beef and cabbage, probably, if it is boiled day. I am not expected at the table to which Aurelia is hastening, yet no guest there shall enjoy more than I enjoy—nor so much, if he considers the meats the best part of the dinner. The beauty of the beautiful Aurelia I see and worship as she drives by. The vision of many beautiful Aurelias driving to dinner is the mirage of that pleasant journey of mine along the avenue. I do not envy the Persian poets, on those afternoons, nor

¹ Or any other brand of claret.

long to be an Arabian traveler. For I can walk that street, finer than any of which the Ispahan architects dreamed ; and I can see sultanas as splendid as the enthusiastic and exaggerating Orientals describe.

But not only do I see and enjoy Aurelia's beauty. I delight in her exquisite attire. In these warm days she does not wear so much as the lightest shawl. She is clad only in the spring sunshine. It glitters in the soft darkness of her hair. It touches the diamonds, the opals, the pearls, that cling to her arms, and neck, and fingers. They flash back again, and the gorgeous silks glisten, and the light laces flutter, until the stately Aurelia seems to me, in tremulous radiance, swimming by.

I doubt whether you who are to have the inexpressible pleasure of dining with her, and even of sitting by her side, will enjoy more than I. For my pleasure is inexpressible, also. And it is in this greater than yours, that I see all the beautiful ones who are to dine at various tables, while you only see your own circle, although that, I will not deny, is the most desirable of all.

Besides, although my person is not present at your dinner, my fancy is. I see Aurelia's carriage stop, and behold white-gloved servants opening wide doors. There is a brief glimpse of magnificence for the dull eyes of the loiterers outside ; then the door closes. But my fancy went in with

Aurelia. With her, it looks at the vast mirror, and surveys her form at length in the Psyche-glass. It gives the final shake to the skirt, the last flirt to the embroidered handkerchief, carefully held, and adjusts the bouquet, complete as a tropic nestling in orange leaves. It descends with her, and marks the faint blush upon her cheek at the thought of her exceeding beauty; the consciousness of the most beautiful woman, that the most beautiful woman is entering the room. There is the momentary hush, the subdued greeting, the quick glance of the Aurelias who have arrived earlier, and who perceive in a moment the hopeless perfection of that attire; the courtly gaze of gentlemen, who feel the serenity of that beauty. All this my fancy surveys; my fancy, Aurelia's invisible cavalier.

You approach with hat¹ in hand and the thumb of your left hand in your waistcoat pocket. You are polished and cool, and have an irreproachable repose of manner. There are no improper wrinkles in your cravat; your shirt-bosom does not bulge; the trousers are accurate about your admirable boot. But you look very stiff and brittle. You are a little bullied by your unexceptionable shirt collar, which interdicts perfect freedom of movement in your head. You are elegant, undoubtedly, but it seems as if you might break and fall to

¹ It must have been the fashion to carry an opera-hat in to dinner or perhaps only to the drawing-room.

pieces, like a porcelain vase, if you were roughly shaken.

Now, here, I have the advantage of you. My fancy quietly surveying the scene is subject to none of these embarrassments. My fancy will not utter commonplaces. That will not say to the superb lady, who stands with her flowers, incarnate May, "What a beautiful day, Miss Aurelia." That will not feel constrained to say something, when it has nothing to say; nor will it be obliged to smother all the pleasant things that occur, because they would be too flattering to express. My fancy perpetually murmurs in Aurelia's ear, "Those flowers would not be fair in your hand, if you yourself were not fairer. That diamond necklace would be gaudy, if your eyes were not brighter. That queenly movement would be awkward, if your soul were not queenlier."

You could not say such things to Aurelia, although, if you are worthy to dine at her side, they are the very things you are longing to say. What insufferable stuff you are talking about the weather, and the opera, and Alboni's delicious voice, and Newport, and Saratoga! They are all very pleasant subjects, but do you suppose Ixion¹ talked Thessalian politics when he was admitted to dine with Juno?

I almost begin to pity you, and to believe that

¹ Ixion lived long ago, in the days of the Greek Mythology.

a scarcity of white waistcoats is true wisdom. For now dinner is announced, and you, O rare felicity, are to hand down Aurelia. But you run the risk of tumbling her expansive skirt, and you have to drop your hat upon a chance chair, and wonder, *en passant*, who will wear it home, which is annoying. My fancy runs no such risk; is not at all solicitous about its hat, and glides by the side of Aurelia, stately as she. There! you stumble on the stair, and are vexed at your own awkwardness, and are sure you saw the ghost of a smile glimmer along that superb face at your side. My fancy doesn't tumble downstairs, and what kind of looks it sees upon Aurelia's face are its own secret.

Is it any better, now you are seated at table? Your companion eats little because she wishes little. You eat little because you think it is elegant to do so. It is a shabby, second-hand elegance, like your brittle behavior. It is just as foolish for you to play with the meats, when you ought to satisfy your healthy appetite generously, as it is for you, in the drawing room, to affect that cool indifference when you have real and noble interests.

I grant you that fine manners, if you please, are a fine art. But is not monotony the destruction of art? Your manners, O happy Ixion, banqueting with Juno, are Egyptian. They have no perspective, no variety. They have no color, no

shading. They are all on a dead level; they are flat. Now, for you are a man of sense, you are conscious that those wonderful eyes of Aurelia see straight through all this network of elegant manners in which you have entangled yourself, and that consciousness is uncomfortable to you. It is another trick in the game for me, because those eyes do not pry into my fancy. How can they, since Aurelia does not know of my existence?

Unless, indeed, she should remember the first time I saw her. It was only last year, in May. I had dined, somewhat hastily, in consideration of the fine day, and of my confidence that many would be wending dinnerwards that afternoon. I saw my Prue comfortably engaged in seating the trousers of Adoniram, our eldest boy,—an economical care to which my darling Prue is not unequal, even in these days and in this town,—and then hurried toward the avenue. It is never much thronged at that hour. The moment is sacred to dinner. As I paused at the corner of Twelfth Street, by the church, you remember, I saw an apple-woman, from whose stores I determined to finish my dessert, which had been imperfect at home. But, mindful of meritorious and economical Prue, I was not the man to pay exorbitant prices for apples, and while still haggling with the wrinkled Eve who had tempted me, I became suddenly aware of a carriage approaching, and, indeed, already close by.

I raised my eyes, still munching an apple which I held in one hand, while the other grasped my walking stick (true to my instincts of dinner guests, as young women to a passing wedding or old ones to a funeral), and beheld Aurelia!

Old in this kind of observation as I am, there was something so graciously alluring in the look that she cast upon me, as unconsciously, indeed, as she would have cast it upon the church, that, fumbling hastily for my spectacles to enjoy the boon more fully, I thoughtlessly advanced upon the apple-stand, and, in some indescribable manner, tripping, down we all fell into the street, old woman, apples, baskets, stand, and I, in promiscuous confusion. As I struggled there, somewhat bewildered, yet sufficiently self-possessed to look after the carriage, I beheld that beautiful woman looking at us through the back window (you could not have done it; the integrity of your shirt collar would have interfered), and smiling pleasantly, so that her going around the corner was like a gentle sunset, so seemed she to disappear in her own smiling; or—if you choose, in view of the apple difficulties—like a rainbow after a storm.

If the beautiful Aurelia recalls that event, she may know of my existence; not otherwise. And even then she knows me only as a funny old gentleman, who, in his eagerness to look at her, tumbled over an apple woman.

My fancy from that moment followed her. How

grateful I was to the wrinkled Eve's extortion, and to the untoward tumble, since it procured me the sight of that smile. I took my sweet revenge from that. For I knew that the beautiful Aurelia entered the house of her host with beaming eyes, and my fancy heard her sparkling story. You consider yourself happy because you are sitting by her and helping her to a lady-finger, or a macaroon, for which she smiles. But I was her theme for ten mortal minutes. She was my bard, my blithe historian. She was the Homer of my luckless Trojan fall. She set my mishap to music, in telling it. Think what it is to have inspired Urania;¹ to have called a brighter beam into the eyes of Miranda; and do not think so much of passing Aurelia the mottoes, my dear young friend.

There was the advantage of not going to that dinner. Had I been invited, as you were, I should have pestered Prue about the buttons on my white waistcoat, instead of leaving her placidly piercing adolescent trousers. She would have been flustered, fearful of being too late, of tumbling the garment, of soiling it, fearful of offending me in some way (admirable woman!), I, in my natural impatience, might have let drop a thoughtless word, which would have been a pang in her heart and a tear in her eye, for weeks afterward.

As I walked nervously up the avenue (for I am

¹ The Heavenly Muse.

unaccustomed to prandial recreations), I should not have had that solacing image of quiet Prue, and the trousers, as the background in the pictures of the gay figures I passed, making each, by contrast, fairer. I should have been wondering what to say and do at the dinner. I should surely have been very warm, and yet not have enjoyed the rich, waning sunlight. Need I tell you that I should not have stopped for apples, but instead of economically tumbling into the street with apples and apple women, whereby I merely rent my trousers across the knee, in a manner that Prue can readily, and at little cost, repair, I should, beyond peradventure, have split a new dollar-pair of gloves in the effort of straining my large hands into them, which would, also, have caused me additional redness in the face, and renewed fluttering.

Above all, I should not have seen Aurelia passing in her carriage, nor would she have smiled at me, nor charmed my memory with her radiance, nor the circle at dinner with the sparkling Iliad of my woes. Then, at the table, I should not have sat by her. You would have had that pleasure; I should have led out the maiden aunt from the country, and have talked poultry, when I talked at all. Aurelia would not have remarked me. Afterward, in describing the dinner to her virtuous parents, she would have concluded, "and one old gentleman, whom I didn't know."

No, my polished friend, whose elegant repose of manner I yet greatly commend, I am content, if you are. How much better it was that I was not invited to that dinner, but was permitted, by a kind fate, to furnish a subject for Aurelia's wit.

There is one other advantage in sending your fancy to dinner, instead of going yourself. It is, that then the occasion remains wholly fair in your memory. You, who devote yourself to dining out, and who are to be daily seen affably sitting down to such feasts, as I know mainly by hearsay — by the report of waiters, guests, and others who were present — you cannot escape the little things that spoil the picture, and which the fancy does not see.

For instance, in handing you the *potage à la Bisque*, at the very commencement of this dinner to-day, John, the waiter, who never did such a thing before, did this time suffer the plate to tip, so that a little of that rare soup dripped into your lap — just enough to spoil those trousers, which is nothing to you, because you can buy a great many more trousers, but which little event is inharmonious with the fine porcelain dinner service, with the fragrant wines, the glittering glass, the beautiful guests, and the mood of mind suggested by all of these. There is, in fact, if you will pardon a free use of the vernacular, there is a grease spot upon your remembrance of this dinner.

Or, in the same way, and with the same kind of

mental result, you can easily imagine the meats a little tough ; a suspicion of smoke somewhere in the sauces ; too much pepper, perhaps, or too little salt ; or there might be the graver dissonance of claret not properly attempered, or a choice Rhenish below the average mark, or the spilling of some of that Arethusa Madeira, marvelous for its innumerable circumnavigations of the globe, and for being as dry as the conversation of the host. These things are not up to the high level of the dinner ; for wherever Aurelia dines, all accessories should be as perfect in their kind as she, the principal, is in hers.

That reminds me of a possible dissonance worse than all. Suppose that soup had trickled down the unimaginable *berthe* of Aurelia's dress (since it might have done so), instead of wasting itself upon your trousers ! Could even the irreproachable elegance of your manners have contemplated, unmoved, a grease spot upon your remembrance of the peerless Aurelia ?

You smile, of course, and remind me that that lady's manners are so perfect that, if she drank poison, she would wipe her mouth after it as gracefully as ever. How much more then, you say, in the case of such a slight *contretemps* as spotting her dress, would she appear totally unmoved.

So she would, undoubtedly. She would be, and look, as pure as ever ; but, my young friend, her

dress would not. Once I dropped a pickled oyster in the lap of my Prue, who wore, on the occasion, her sea-green silk gown. I did not love my Prue the less ; but there certainly was a very unhand-some spot upon her dress. And although I know my Prue to be spotless, yet, whenever I recall that day, I see her in a spotted gown, and I would prefer never to have been obliged to think of her in such a garment.

Can you not make the application to the case, very likely to happen, of some disfigurement of that exquisite toilette of Aurelia's? In going downstairs, for instance, why should not heavy old Mr. Carbuncle, who is coming close behind with Mrs. Peony, both very eager for dinner, tread upon the hem of that garment which my lips would grow pale to kiss? The august Aurelia, yielding to natural laws, would be drawn suddenly backward — a very undignified movement — and the dress would be dilapidated. There would be apologies, and smiles, and forgiveness, and pinning up the pieces, nor would there be the faintest feeling of awkwardness or vexation in Aurelia's mind. But to you, looking on, and, beneath all that pure show of waistcoat, cursing old Carbuncle's carelessness, this tearing of dresses and repair of the toilette is by no means a poetic and cheerful spectacle. Nay, the very impatience that it produces in your mind jars upon the harmony of the moment.

You will respond, with proper scorn, that you are not so absurdly fastidious as to heed the little necessary drawbacks of social meetings, and that you have not much regard for "the harmony of the occasion" (which phrase I fear you will repeat in a sneering tone). You will do very right in saying this ; and it is a remark to which I shall give all the hospitality of my mind, and I do so because I heartily coincide in it. I hold a man to be very foolish who will not eat a good dinner because the tablecloth is not clean, or who cavils at the spots upon the sun. But still a man who does not apply his eye to a telescope, or some kind of prepared medium, does not see those spots, while he has just as much light and heat as he who does.

So it is with me. I walk in the avenue, and eat all the delightful dinners, without seeing the spots upon the tablecloth, and behold all the beautiful Aurelias without swearing at old Carbuncle. I am the guest who, for the small price of invisibility, drinks only the best wines, and talks only to the most agreeable people. That is something, I can tell you, for you might be asked to lead out old Mrs. Peony. My fancy slips in between you and Aurelia, sit you never so closely together. It not only hears what she says, but it perceives what she thinks and feels. It lies like a bee in her flowery thoughts, sucking all their honey. If there are unhandsome or unfeeling guests at table, it will not see them. It knows only the

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good and fair. As I stroll in the fading light and observe the stately houses, my fancy believes the host equal to his house, and the courtesy of his wife more agreeable than her conservatory.

It will not believe that the pictures on the wall and the statues in the corners shame the guests. It will not allow that they are less than noble. It hears them speak gently of error, and warmly of worth. It knows that they commend heroism and devotion, and reprobate insincerity. My fancy is convinced that the guests are not only feasted upon the choicest fruits of every land and season, but are refreshed by a consciousness of greater loveliness and grace in human character.

Now you, who actually go to the dinner, may not entirely agree with the view my fancy takes of that entertainment. Is it not, therefore, rather your loss? Or, to put it in another way, ought I to envy you the discovery that the guests *are* shamed by the statues and pictures ;— yes, and by the spoons and forks also, if they should chance neither to be so genuine nor so useful as those instruments? And, worse than this, when your fancy wishes to enjoy the picture which mine forms of that feast, it cannot do so, because you have foolishly interpolated the fact between the dinner and your fancy.

Of course, by this time it is late twilight, and the spectacle I enjoyed is almost over. But not quite, for as I return slowly along the streets, the

windows are open, and only a thin haze of lace or muslin separates me from the paradise within.

I see the graceful cluster of girls hovering over the piano, and the quiet groups of the elders in easy chairs, around little tables. I cannot hear what is said, nor plainly see the faces. But some hoyden evening wind, more daring than I, abruptly parts the cloud to look in, and out comes a gush of light, music, and fragrance, so that I shrink away into the dark, that I may not seem, even by chance, to have invaded that privacy.

Suddenly there is singing. It is Aurelia, who does not cope with the Italian prima donna, nor sing indifferently to-night, what was sung superbly last evening at the opera. She has a strange, low, sweet voice, as if she only sang in the twilight. It is the ballad of "Allan Percy" that she sings. There is no dainty applause of kid gloves, when it is ended, but silence follows the singing, like a tear.

Then you, my young friend, ascend into the drawing room, and, after a little graceful gossip, retire; or you wait, possibly, to hand Aurelia into her carriage, and arrange a waltz for to-morrow evening. She smiles, you bow, and it is over. But it is not yet over with me. My fancy still follows her, and, like a prophetic dream, rehearses her destiny. For, as the carriage rolls away into the darkness and I return homeward, how can my fancy help rolling away also, into the dim future, watching her go down the years?

Upon my way home I see her in a thousand new situations. My fancy says to me, "The beauty of this beautiful woman is heaven's stamp upon virtue. She will be equal to every chance that shall befall her, and she is so radiant and charming in the circle of prosperity, only because she has that irresistible simplicity and fidelity of character, which can also pluck the sting from adversity. Do you not see, you wan old bookkeeper in faded cravat, that in a poor man's house this superb Aurelia would be more stately than sculpture, more beautiful than painting, and more graceful than the famous vases? Would her husband regret the opera if she sang 'Allan Percy' to him in the twilight? Would he not feel richer than the Poets, when his eyes rose from their jeweled pages, to fall again dazzled by the splendor of his wife's beauty?"

At this point in my reflections I sometimes run, rather violently, against a lamp post, and then proceed along the street more sedately.

It is yet early when I reach home, where my Prue awaits me. The children are asleep, and the trousers mended. The admirable woman is patient of my idiosyncrasies, and asks me if I have had a pleasant walk, and if there were many fine dinners to-day, as if I had been expected at a dozen tables. She even asks me if I have seen the beautiful Aurelia (for there is always some Aurelia), and inquires what dress she wore. I respond, and

dilate upon what I have seen. Prue listens, as the children listen to her fairy tales. We discuss the little stories that penetrate our retirement, of the great people who actually dine out. Prue, with fine womanly instinct, declares it a shame that Aurelia should smile for a moment upon —, yes, even upon you, my friend of the irreproachable manners!

“I know him,” says my simple Prue; “I have watched his cold courtesy, his insincere devotion. I have seen him acting in the boxes at the opera, much more adroitly than the singers upon the stage. I have read his determination to marry Aurelia; and I shall not be surprised,” concludes my tender wife sadly, “if he wins her at last, by tiring her out, or, by secluding her by his constant devotion from the homage of other men, convinces her that she had better marry him, since it is so dismal to live on unmarried.”

And so, my friend, at the moment when the bouquet you ordered is arriving at Aurelia’s house, and she is sitting before the glass while her maid arranges the last flower in her hair, my darling Prue, whom you will never hear of, is shedding tears over your probable union, and I am sitting by, adjusting my cravat and incontinently clearing my throat.

It is rather a ridiculous business, I allow; yet you will smile at it tenderly, rather than scornfully, if you remember that it shows how closely linked we

creatures are, without knowing it, and that more hearts than we dream of enjoy our happiness and share our sorrow.

Thus, I dine at great tables uninvited, and, unknown, converse with the famous beauties. If Aurelia is at last engaged (but who is worthy?) she will, with even greater care, arrange that wondrous toilette, will teach that lace a fall more alluring, those gems a sweeter light. But even then, as she rolls to dinner in her carriage, glad that she is fair, not for her own sake nor for the world's, but for that of a single youth (who I hope, has not been smoking at the club all the morning), I, sauntering upon the sidewalk, see her pass, I pay homage to her beauty, and her lover can do no more; and if, perchance, my garments — which must seem quaint to her, with their shining knees and carefully brushed elbows; my white cravat, careless, yet prim; my meditative movements, as I put my stick under my arm to pare an apple, and not, I hope, this time to fall into the street — should remind her, in her spring of youth, and beauty, and love, that there are age, and care, and poverty, also; then, perhaps, the good fortune of the meeting is not wholly mine.

For, O beautiful Aurelia, two of these things, at least, must come even to you. There will be a time when you will no longer go out to dinner, or only very quietly, in the family. I shall be gone then; but other old bookkeepers in white cravats

will inherit my tastes, and saunter, on summer afternoons, to see what I loved to see.

They will not pause, I fear, in buying apples, to look at the old lady in venerable cap, who is rolling by in the carriage. They will worship another Aurelia. You will not wear diamonds or opals any more, only one pearl upon your blue-veined finger — your engagement ring. Grave clergymen and antiquated beaux will hand you down to dinner, and the group of polished youth, who gather around the yet unborn Aurelia of that day, will look at you sitting quietly upon the sofa, and say softly, "She must have been very handsome in her time."

All this must be : for consider how few years since it was your grandmother who was the belle, by whose side the handsome young men longed to sit and pass expressive mottoes. Your grandmother was the Aurelia of a half-century ago, although you cannot fancy her young. She is indissolubly associated in your mind with caps and dark dresses. You can believe Mary Queen of Scots, or Nell Gwyn, or Cleopatra, to have been young and blooming, although they belong to old and dead centuries, but not your grandmother. Think of those who shall believe the same of you — you, who to-day are the very flower of youth.

Might I plead with you, Aurelia — I, who would be too happy to receive one of those graciously beaming bows that I see you bestow upon young

men, in passing — I would ask you to bear that thought with you, always, not to sadden your sunny smile, but to give it a more subtle grace. Wear in your summer garland this little leaf of rue. It will not be the skull at the feast, it will rather be the tender thoughtfulness in the face of the young Madonna.

For the years pass like summer clouds, Aurelia, and the children of yesterday are the wives and mothers of to-day. Even I do sometimes discover the mild eyes of my Prue fixed pensively upon my face, as if searching for the bloom which she remembers there in the days, long ago, when we were young. She will never see it there again, any more than the flowers she held in her hand, in our old spring rambles. Yet the tear that slowly gathers as she gazes, is not grief that the bloom has faded from my cheek, but the sweet consciousness that it can never fade from my heart; and as her eyes fall upon her work again, or the children climb her lap to hear the old fairy tales they already know by heart, my wife Prue is dearer to me than the sweetheart of those days long ago.

SEA FROM SHORE

“Come unto these yellow sands.”

The Tempest.

“Argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales.”

Locksley Hall.

IN the month of June, Prue and I like to walk upon the Battery toward sunset, and watch the steamers, crowded with passengers, bound for the pleasant places along the coast where people pass the hot months. Seaside lodgings are not very comfortable, I am told ; but who would not be a little pinched in his chamber, if his windows looked upon the sea ?

In such praises of the ocean do I indulge at such times, and so respectfully do I regard the sailors who may chance to pass, that Prue often says, with her shrewd smiles, that my mind is a kind of Greenwich Hospital,¹ full of abortive marine hopes and wishes, broken-legged intentions, blind regrets, and desires whose hands have been shot away in some hard battle of experience, so that they cannot grasp the results toward which they reach.

She is right, as usual. Such hopes and intentions do lie, ruined and hopeless now, strewn about the placid contentment of my mental life, as the

¹ An old-sailors' hospital in England.

old pensioners sit about the grounds at Greenwich, maimed and musing in the quiet morning sunshine. Many a one among them thinks what a Nelson he would have been if both his legs had not been prematurely carried away ; or in what a Trafalgar of triumph he would have ended, if, unfortunately, he had not happened to have been blown blind by the explosion of that unlucky magazine.

So I dream, sometimes, of a straight scarlet collar, stiff with gold lace, around my neck, instead of this limp white cravat ; and I have even brandished my quill at the office so cutlass-wise, that Titbottom¹ has paused in his additions and looked at me as if he doubted whether I should come out quite square in my petty cash. Yet he understands it. Titbottom was born in Nantucket.

That is the secret of my fondness for the sea ; I was born by it. Not more surely do Savoyards pine for the mountains, or Cockneys for the sound of Bow bells,² than those who are born within sight and sound of the ocean to return to it and renew their fealty. In dreams the children of the sea hear its voice. I have read in some book of travels that certain tribes of Arabs have no name for the ocean, and that when they came to the shore for the first time, they asked with eager sad-

¹ A fellow bookkeeper.

² The bells of the Church of St. Mary le Bow on Cheapside London.

ness, as if penetrated by the conviction of a superior beauty, "What, is that desert of water more beautiful than the land?"

And in the translations of German stories which Adoniram and the other children read, and into which I occasionally look in the evening when they are gone to bed—for I like to know what interests my children—I find that the Germans, who do not live near the sea, love the fairy lore of water, and tell the sweet stories of Undine and Melusina, as if they had especial charm for them, because their country is inland.

We who know the sea have less fairy feeling about it, but our realities are romance. My earliest remembrances¹ are of a long range of old half-dilapidated stores; red brick stores with steep wooden roofs, and stone window frames and door frames, which stood upon docks built as if for immense trade with all quarters of the globe.

Generally they were only a few sloops moored to the tremendous posts, which I fancied could easily hold fast a Spanish Armada in a tropical hurricane. But sometimes a great ship, an East Indiaman, with rusty, seamed, blistered sides, and dingy sails, came slowly moving up the harbor, with an air of indolent self-importance and consciousness of superiority, which inspired me with profound respect. If the ship had ever chanced to run down a rowboat, or a sloop, or any specimen

¹ Curtis was born in Providence, Rhode Island.

of smaller craft, I should only have wondered at the temerity of any floating thing in crossing the path of such supreme majesty. The ship was leisurely chained and cabled to the old dock, and then came the disemboweling.

How the stately monster had been fattening upon foreign spoils ! How it had gorged itself (such galleons did never seem to me of the feminine gender) with the luscious treasures of the tropics ! It had lain its lazy length along the shores of China, and sucked in whole flowery harvests of tea. The Brazilian sun flashed through the strong wicker prisons, bursting with bananas and nectarean fruits that eschew the temperate zone. Steams of camphor, of sandal wood, arose from the hold. Sailors chanting cabalistic strains, that had to my ear a shrill and monotonous pathos, like the uniform rising and falling of an autumn wind, turned cranks that lifted the bales, and boxes, and crates, and swung them ashore.

But to my mind, the spell of their singing raised the fragrant freight, and not the crank. Madagascar and Ceylon appeared at the mystic bidding of the song. The placid sunshine of the docks was perfumed with India. The universal calm of southern seas poured from the bosom of the ship over the quiet, decaying old northern port.

Long after the confusion of unloading was over, and the ship lay as if all voyages were ended, I dared to creep timorously along the edge of the

dock, and at great risk of falling in the black water of its huge shadow, I placed my hand upon the hot hulk, and so established a mystic and exquisite connection with Pacific islands, with palm groves and all the passionate beauties they embower ; with jungles, Bengal tigers, pepper, and the crushed feet of Chinese fairies. I touched Asia, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Happy Islands. I would not believe that the heat I felt was of our northern sun ; to my finer sympathy it burned with equatorial fervors.

The freight was piled in the old stores. I believe that many of them remain, but they have lost their character. When I knew them, not only was I younger, but partial decay had overtaken the town ; at least the bulk of its India trade had shifted to New York and Boston. But the appliances remained. There was no throng of busy traffickers, and after school, in the afternoon, I strolled by and gazed into the solemn interiors.

Silence reigned within, — silence, dimness, and piles of foreign treasure. Vast coils of cable, like tame boa-constrictors, served as seats for men with large stomachs and heavy watch seals, and nankeen trousers, who sat looking out of the door toward the ships, with little other sign of life than an occasional low talking, as if in their sleep. Huge hogsheads perspiring brown sugar and oozing slow molasses, as if nothing tropical could keep within bounds, but must continually expand, and exude,

and overflow, stood against the walls, and had an architectural significance, for they darkly reminded me of Egyptian prints, and in the duskiness of the low-vaulted store seemed cyclopean columns incomplete. Strange festoons and heaps of bags, square piles of square boxes cased in mats, bales of airy summer stuffs, which, even in winter, scoffed at cold, and shamed it by audacious assumption of eternal sun ; little specimen boxes of precious dyes that even now shine through my memory, like old Venetian schools unpainted, — these were all there in rich confusion.

The stores had a twilight of dimness, the air was spicy with mingled odors. I liked to look suddenly in from the glare of sunlight outside, and then the cool sweet dimness was like the palpable breath of the far-off island groves ; and if only some parrot or macaw hung within, would flaunt with glistening plumage in his cage, and as the gay hue flashed in a chance sunbeam, call in his hard, shrill voice, as if thrusting sharp sounds upon a glistening wire from out that grateful gloom, then the enchantment was complete, and, without moving, I was circumnavigating the globe.

From the old stores and the docks slowly crumbling, touched, I know not why or how, by the pensive air of past prosperity, I rambled out of town on those well-remembered afternoons, to the fields that lay upon hillsides over the harbor, and

there sat, looking out to sea, fancying some distant sail proceeding to the glorious ends of the earth, to be my type and image, who would so sail, stately and successful, to all the glorious ports of the Future. Going home, I returned by the stores, which black porters were closing. But I stood long looking in, saturating my imagination, and as it appeared, my clothes, with the spicy suggestion. For when I reached home, my thrifty mother — another Prue — came snuffing and smelling about me.

“Why! my son (*snuff, snuff*), where have you been? (*snuff, snuff*). Has the baker been making (*snuff*) gingerbread? You smell as if you’d been in (*snuff, snuff*) a bag of cinnamon.”

“I’ve only been on the wharves, mother.”

“Well, my dear, I hope you haven’t stuck up your clothes with molasses. Wharves are dirty places, and dangerous. You must take care of yourself, my son. Really this smell is (*snuff, snuff*) very strong.”

But I departed from the maternal presence, proud and happy. I was aromatic. I bore about me the true foreign air. Whoever smelled me smelled distant countries. I had nutmeg, spices, cinnamon, and cloves, without the jolly red nose. I pleased myself with being the representative of the Indies. I was in good odor with myself and all the world.

I do not know how it is, but surely nature makes

kindly provision. An imagination so easily excited as mine could not have escaped disappointment if it had had ample opportunity and experience of the lands it so longed to see. Therefore, although I made the India voyage, I have never been a traveler, and saving the little time I was ashore in India, I did not lose the sense of novelty and romance which the first sight of foreign lands inspires.

That little time was all my foreign travel. I am glad of it. I see now that I should never have found the country from which the East Indiaman of my early days arrived. The palm groves do not grow with which that hand laid upon the ship placed me in magic connection. As for the lovely Indian maid whom the palmy arches bowered, she has long since clasped some native lover to her bosom, and, ripened into mild maternity, how should I know her now?

“You would find her quite as easily now as then,” says my Prue, when I speak of it.

She is right again, as usual, that precious woman; and it is therefore I feel that if the chances of life have moored me fast to a book-keeper’s desk, they have left all the lands I longed to see fairer and fresher in my mind than they could ever be in my memory. Upon my only voyage I used to climb into the top and search the horizon for the shore. But now in a moment of calm thought I see a more Indian India than ever

mariner discerned, and do not envy the youths who go there and make fortunes, who wear grass-cloth jackets, drink iced beer, and eat curry; whose minds fall asleep, and whose bodies have liver complaints.

Unseen by me forever, nor ever regretted, shall wave the Egyptian palms and the Italian pines. Untrodden by me, the Forum shall still echo with the footfall of imperial Rome, and the Parthenon, unrifled of its marbles, look, perfect, across the Egean blue.

My young friends return from their foreign tours elate with the smiles of a nameless Italian or Parisian belle. I know not such cheap delights; I am a suitor of Vittoria Colonna; I walk with Tasso along the terraced garden of the Villa d'Este, and look to see Beatrice smiling down the rich gloom of the cypress shade. You stayed at the Hôtel Europa, in Venice, at Danielli's, or the Leone bianco; I am the guest of Marino Faliero,¹ and I whisper to his wife as we climb the giant staircase in the summer moon-light:—

“ Ah ! senza amare
Andare sul mare,
Col sposa del mare,
Non puo consolare.”²

It is for the same reason that I did not care to dine with you and Aurelia, that I am content not

¹ Doge of Venice, 1354.

² “ Ah to go upon the sea without love, cannot delight, even with the bride of the sea.”

to stand in St. Peter's. Alas ! if I could see the end of it, it would not be St. Peter's. For those of us whom Nature means to keep at home, she provides entertainment. One man goes four thousand miles to Italy, and does not see it, he is so short-sighted. Another is so far-sighted that he stays in his room and sees more than Italy.

But for this very reason that it washes the shores of my possible Europe and Asia, the sea draws me constantly to itself. Before I came to New York, while I was still a clerk in Boston, courting Prue, and living out of town, I never knew of a ship sailing for India or even for England and France, but I went up to the State House cupola or to the observatory on some friend's house in Roxbury, where I could not be interrupted, and there watched the departure.

The sails hung ready ; the ship lay in the stream ; busy little boats and puffing steamers darted about it, clung to its sides, paddled away from it, or led the way to sea, as minnows might pilot a whale. The anchor was slowly swung at the bow ; I could not hear the sailors' song ; but I knew they were singing. I could not see the parting friends, but I knew farewells were spoken. I did not share the confusion, although I knew what bustle there was, what hurry, what shouting, what creaking, what fall of ropes and iron, what sharp oaths, low laughs, whispers, sobs. But I was cool, high, separate. To me it was

“A painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.”

The sails were shaken out, and the ship began to move. It was a fair breeze, perhaps, and no steamer was needed to tow her away. She receded down the bay. Friends turned back—I could not see them—and waved their hands, and wiped their eyes, and went home to dinner. Farther and farther from the ships at anchor, the lessening vessel became single and solitary upon the water. The sun sank in the west; but I watched her still. Every flash of her sails, as she tacked and turned, thrilled my heart.

Yet Prue was not on board. I had never seen one of the passengers or the crew. I did not know the consignees, nor the name of the vessel. I had shipped no adventure, nor risked any insurance, nor made any bet, but my eyes clung to her as Ariadne's to the fading sail of Theseus. The ship was freighted with more than appeared upon her papers, yet she was not a smuggler. She bore all there was of that nameless lading, yet the next ship would carry as much. She was freighted with fancy. My hopes, and wishes, and vague desires, were all on board. It seemed to me a treasure not less rich than that which filled the East Indiaman at the old dock in my boyhood.

When, at length, the ship was a sparkle upon the horizon, I waved my hand in last farewell, I

strained my eyes for a last glimpse. My mind had gone to sea, and had left noise behind. But now I heard again the multitudinous murmur of the city, and went down rapidly, and threaded the short, narrow streets to the office. Yet, believe it, every dream of that day, as I watched the vessel, was written at night to Prue. She knew my heart had not sailed away.

Those days are long past now, but still I walk upon the Battery and look toward the Narrows, and know that beyond them, separated only by the sea, are many of whom I would so gladly know and so rarely hear. The sea rolls between us like the lapse of dusky ages. They trusted themselves to it, and it bore them away far and far as if into the past. Last night I read of Antony, but I have not heard from Christopher these many months, and by so much farther away is he, so much older and more remote, than Antony. As for William, he is as vague as any of the shepherd kings of ante-Pharaonic dynasties.

It is the sea that has done it, it has carried them off and put them away upon its other side. It is fortunate the sea did not put them upon its underside. Are they hale and happy still? Is their hair gray, and have they mustachios? Or have they taken to wigs and crutches? Are they popes or cardinals yet? Do they feast with Lucrezia Borgia, or preach red republicanism to the

Council of Ten? Do they sing, "Behold how brightly breaks the morning" with Masaniello? Do they laugh at Ulysses and skip ashore to the Sirens? Has Mesrour, chief of the Eunuchs, caught them with Zobeide in the Caliph's garden, or have they made cheesecakes without pepper? Friends of my youth, where in your wanderings have you tasted the blissful Lotus, that you neither come nor send us tidings?

Across the sea also came idle rumors, as false reports steal into history and defile fair fame. Was it longer ago than yesterday that I walked with my cousin, then recently a widow, and talked with her of the countries to which she meant to sail? She was young, and dark-eyed, and wore great hoops of gold, barbaric gold, in her ears. The hope of Italy, the thought of living there, had risen like a dawn in the darkness of her mind. I talked and listened by rapid turns.

Was it longer ago than yesterday that she told me of her splendid plans, how palaces tapestried with gorgeous paintings should be cheaply hired, and the best of teachers lead her children to the completest and most various knowledge; how—and with her slender pittance! she should have a box at the opera, and a carriage, and liveried servants, and in perfect health and youth, lead a perfect life in a perfect climate?

And now what do I hear? Why does a tear sometimes drop so audibly upon my paper, that

Titbottom looks across with a sort of mild rebuking glance of inquiry, whether it is kind to let even a single tear fall, when an ocean of tears is pent up in hearts that would burst and overflow if but one drop should force its way out? Why across the sea come faint gusty stories, like low voices in the wind, of a cloistered garden and sunny seclusion — and a life of unknown and unexplained luxury. What is this picture of a pale face showered with streaming black hair, and large sad eyes looking upon lovely and noble children playing in the sunshine — and a brow pained with thought straining into their destiny? Who is this figure, a man tall and comely, with melting eyes and graceful motion, who comes and goes at pleasure, who is not a husband, yet has the key of the cloistered garden?

I do not know. They are secrets of the sea. The pictures pass before my mind suddenly and unawares, and I feel the tears rising that I would gladly repress. Titbottom looks at me, then stands by the window of the office, and leans his brow against the cold iron bars, and looks down into the little square paved court. I take my hat and steal out of the office for a few minutes, and slowly pace the hurrying streets. Meek-eyed Alice! magnificent Maud! sweet baby Lilian! why does the sea imprison you so far away, when will you return, where do you linger? The water laps idly about the docks, — lies calm, or gayly

heaves. Why does it bring me doubts and fears now, that brought such bounty of beauty in the days long gone ?

I remember that the day when my dark-haired cousin, with hoops of barbaric gold in her ears, sailed for Italy, was quarter day, and we balanced the books at the office. It was nearly noon, and in my impatience to be away I had not added my columns with sufficient care. The inexorable hand of the office clock pointed sternly toward twelve, and the remorseless pendulum ticked solemnly to noon.

To a man whose pleasures are not many, and rather small, the loss of such an event as saying farewell and wishing godspeed to a friend going to Europe, is a great loss. It was so to me, especially, because there was always more to me, in every departure, than the parting and the farewell. I was gradually renouncing this pleasure, as I saw small prospect of ending before noon, when Titbottom, after looking at me a moment, came to my side of the desk, and said : —

“ I should like to finish that for you.”

I looked at him ; poor Titbottom ! he had no friends to wish godspeed upon any journey. I quietly wiped my pen, took down my hat, and went out. It was in the days of sail packets and less regularity, when going to Europe was more of an epoch in life. How gayly my cousin stood upon the deck and detailed to me her plan ! How

merrily the children shouted and sang ! How long I held my cousin's little hand in mine, and gazed into her great eyes, remembering that they would see and touch the things that were invisible to me forever, but all the more precious and fair ! She kissed me — I was younger then — there were tears, I remember, and prayers, and promises, a waving handkerchief — a fading sail.

It was only the other day that I saw another parting of the same kind. I was not a principal, only a spectator ; but so fond am I of sharing, afar off, as it were, and unseen, the sympathies of human beings, that I cannot avoid often going to the dock upon steamer days, and giving myself to that pleasant and melancholy observation. There is always a crowd, but this day it was almost impossible to advance through the masses of people. The eager faces hurried by ; a constant stream poured up the gangway into the steamer, and the upper deck, to which I gradually made my way, was crowded with the passengers and their friends.

There was one group upon which my eyes first fell, and upon which my memory lingers. A glance, brilliant as daybreak — a voice,

“ Her voice's music — call it the well's bubbling, the bird's warble,”

a goddess girdled with flowers, and smiling farewell upon a circle of worshipers, to each one of whom that gracious calmness made the smile sweeter, and the farewell more sad — other figures,

other flowers, an angel face — all these I saw in that group as I was swayed up and down the deck by the eager swarm of people. The hour came, and I went on shore with the rest. The plank was drawn away — the captain raised his hand — the huge steamer slowly moved — a cannon was fired — the ship was gone.

The sun sparkled upon the water as they sailed away. In five minutes the steamer was as much separated from the shore as if it had been at sea a thousand years.

I leaned against a post upon the dock and looked around. Ranged upon the edge of the wharf stood that band of worshipers, waving handkerchiefs and straining their eyes to see the last smile of farewell — did any eager selfish eye hope to see a tear? They to whom the handkerchiefs were waved stood high upon the stern, holding flowers. Over them hung the great flag, raised by the gentle wind into the graceful folds of a canopy — say rather a gorgeous gonfalon waved over the triumphant departure, over that supreme youth, and bloom, and beauty, going out across the mystic ocean to carry a finer charm and more human splendor into those realms of my imagination beyond the sea.

“You will return, O youth and beauty!” I said to my dreaming and foolish self, as I contemplated those fair figures, “richer than Alexander with Indian spoils. All that historic

association, that copious civilization, those grandeurs and graces of art, that variety and picturesqueness of life, will mellow and deepen your experience even as time silently touches those old pictures into a more persuasive and pathetic beauty, and as this increasing summer sheds ever softer luster upon the landscape. You will return conquerors and not conquered. You will bring Europe, even as Aurelian brought Zenobia captive, to deck your homeward triumph. I do not wonder that these clouds break away, I do not wonder that the sun presses out and floods all the air, and land, and water, with light that graces with happy omens your stately farewell."

But if my faded face looked after them with such earnest and longing emotion, — I, a solitary old man, unknown to those fair beings, and standing apart from that band of lovers, yet in that moment bound more closely to them than they knew, — how was it with those whose hearts sailed away with that youth and beauty? I watched them closely from behind my post. I knew that life had paused with them; that the world stood still. I knew that the long, long summer would be only a yearning regret. I knew that each asked himself the mournful question, "Is this parting typical — this slow, sad, sweet recession?" And I knew that they did not care to ask whether they should meet again, nor dare to contemplate the chances of the sea.

The steamer swept on, she was near Staten Island, and a final gun boomed far and low across the water. The crowd was dispersing, but the little group remained. Was it not all Hood had sung?

“ I saw thee, lovely Inez
Descend along the shore
With bands of noble gentlemen,
And banners waved before ;
And gentle youths and maidens gay,
And snowy plumes they wore ;
It would have been a beauteous dream,
If it had been no more ! ”

“ O youth ! ” I said to them without speaking, “ be it gently said, as it is solemnly thought, should they return no more, yet in your memories the high hour of your loveliness is forever enshrined. Should they come no more they never will be old, nor changed to you. You will wax and wane, you will suffer, and struggle, and grow old ; but this summer vision will smile, immortal, upon your lives, and those fair faces shall shed, forever from under that slowly waving flag, hope and peace.”

It is so elsewhere ; it is the tenderness of Nature. Long, long ago we lost our firstborn, Prue and I. Since then, we have grown older and our children with us. Change comes, and grief, perhaps, and decay. We are happy, our children are obedient and gay. But should Prue live until she has lost us all, and laid us, gray and weary, in our graves,

she will have always one babe in her heart. Every mother who has lost an infant, has gained a child of immortal youth. Can you find comfort here, lovers, whose mistress has sailed away?

I did not ask the question aloud, I thought it only, as I watched the youths, and turned away while they still stood gazing. One, I observed, climbed a post and waved his black hat before the white-washed side of the shed over the dock, whence I supposed he would tumble into the water. Another had tied a handkerchief to the end of a somewhat baggy umbrella, and in the eagerness of gazing, had forgotten to wave it, so that it hung mournfully down, as if overpowered with grief it could not express. The entranced youth still held the umbrella aloft. It seemed to me as if he had struck his flag; or as if one of my cravats were airing in that sunlight. A negro carter was joking with an apple-woman at the entrance of the dock. The steamer was out of sight.

I found that I was belated and hurried back to my desk. Alas! poor lovers; I wonder if they are watching still? Has he fallen exhausted from the post into the water? Is that handkerchief, bleached and rent, still pendant upon that somewhat baggy umbrella?

"Youth and beauty went to Europe to-day," said I to Prue, as I stirred my tea at evening.

As I spoke, our youngest daughter brought me the sugar. She is just eighteen, and her name

should be Hebe. I took a lump of sugar and looked at her. She had never seemed so lovely, and as I dropped the lump in my cup, I kissed her. I glanced at Prue as I did so. The dear woman smiled, but did not answer my exclamation.

Thus without traveling, I travel, and share the emotions of those I do not know. But sometimes the old longing comes over me as in the days when I timidly touched the huge East Indiaman, and magnetically sailed round the world.

It was but a few days after the lovers and I waved farewell to the steamer, and while the lovely figures standing under the great gonfalon were as vivid in my mind as ever, that a day of premature sunny sadness, like those of the Indian summer, drew me away from the office early in the afternoon; for fortunately it is our dull season now, and even Titbottom sometimes leaves the office by five o'clock. Although why he should leave it, or where he goes, or what he does, I do not well know. Before I knew him, I used sometimes to meet him with a man whom I was afterward told was Bartleby, the scrivener. Even then it seemed to me that they rather clubbed their loneliness than made society for each other. Recently I have not seen Bartleby; but Titbottom seems no more solitary because he is alone.

I strolled into the Battery as I sauntered about. Staten Island looked so alluring, tender-hued with summer and melting in the haze, that I resolved

to indulge myself in a pleasure-trip. It was a little selfish, perhaps, to go alone, but I looked at my watch, and saw that if I should hurry home for Prue the trip would be lost; then I should be disappointed, and she would be grieved.

Ought I not rather (I like to begin questions, which I am going to answer affirmatively, with *ought*) to take the trip and recount my adventures to Prue upon my return, whereby I should actually enjoy the excursion and the pleasure of telling her; while she would enjoy my story and be glad that I was pleased? Ought I willfully to deprive us both of this various enjoyment by aiming at a higher, which, in losing, we should lose all?

Unfortunately, just as I was triumphantly answering "Certainly not!" another question marched into my mind, escorted by a very defiant *ought*.

"Ought I to go when I have such a debate about it?"

But while I was perplexed, and scoffing at my own scruples, the ferry-bell suddenly rang, and answered all my questions. Involuntarily I hurried on board. The boat slipped from the dock. I went up on deck to enjoy the view of the city from the bay, but just as I sat down, and meant to have said "How beautiful!" I found myself asking:—

"Ought I to have come?"

Lost in perplexing debate, I saw little of the scenery of the bay; but the remembrance of Prue

and the gentle influence of the day plunged me into a mood of pensive reverie which nothing tended to destroy, until we suddenly arrived at the landing.

As I was stepping ashore, I was greeted by Mr. Bourne, who passes the summer on the island, and who hospitably asked if I were going his way. His way was toward the southern end of the island, and I said yes. His pockets were full of papers and his brow of wrinkles; so when we reached the point where he should turn off, I asked him to let me alight, although he was very anxious to carry me wherever I was going.

"I am only strolling about," I answered, as I clambered carefully out of the wagon.

"Strolling about?" asked he, in a bewildered manner; "do people stroll about, nowadays?"

"Sometimes," I answered, smiling, as I pulled my trousers down over my boots, for they had dragged up, as I stepped out of the wagon, "and besides, what can an old bookkeeper do better in the dull season than stroll about this pleasant island, and watch the ships at sea?"

Bourne looked at me with his weary eyes.

"I'd give five thousand dollars a year for a dull season," said he, "but as for strolling, I've forgotten how."

As he spoke his eyes wandered dreamily across the fields and woods, and were fastened upon the distant sails.

"It is pleasant," he said musingly, and fell into silence. But I had no time to spare, so I wished him good-afternoon.

"I hope your wife is well," said Bourne to me, as I turned away. Poor Bourne! He drove on alone in his wagon.

But I made haste to the most solitary point upon the southern shore, and there sat, glad to be so near the sea. There was that warm, sympathetic silence in the air that gives to Indian summer days almost a human tenderness of feeling. A delicate haze, that seemed only the kindly air made visible, hung over the sea. The water lapped languidly among the rocks, and the voices of children, in a boat beyond, rang musically, and gradually receded, until they were lost in the distance.

It was some time before I was aware of the outline of a large ship, drawn vaguely upon the mist, which I supposed, at first, to be only a kind of mirage. But the more steadfastly I gazed, the more distinct it became, and I could no longer doubt that I saw a stately ship lying at anchor, not more than half a mile from the land.

"It is an extraordinary place to anchor," I said to myself, "or can she be ashore?"

There were no signs of distress; the sails were carefully clewed up, and there were no sailors in the tops nor upon the shrouds. A flag, of which I could not see the device or the nation, hung heavily at the stern, and looked as if it had fallen

asleep. My curiosity began to be singularly excited. The form of the vessel seemed not to be permanent; but within a quarter of an hour, I was sure that I had seen half a dozen different ships. As I gazed, I saw no more sails nor masts, but a long range of oars, flashing like a golden fringe, or straight and stiff, like the legs of a sea-monster.

"It is some bloated crab, or lobster, magnified by the mist," I said to myself complacently.

But, at the same moment, there was a concentrated flashing and blazing in one spot among the rigging, and it was as if I saw a beautified ram, or, more truly, a sheepskin splendid as the Hair of Berenice.¹

"Is that the golden fleece?" I thought. "But surely, Jason and the Argonauts have gone home long since. Do people go on gold-fleecing expeditions now?" I asked myself in perplexity. "Can this be a California steamer?"

How could I have thought it a steamer? Did I not see those sails, "thin and sere"? Did I not feel the melancholy of that solitary bark? It had a mystic aura; a boreal brilliancy shimmered in its wake, for it was drifting seaward. A strange fear curdled along my veins. That summer sun shone cool. The weary, battered ship was gashed, as if gnawed by ice. There was terror in the air, as a "skinny hand so brown" waved to me from the

¹ One of the constellations.

deck. I lay as one bewitched. The hand of the ancient mariner seemed to be reaching for me, like the hand of death.

Death? Why, as I was inly praying Prue's forgiveness for my solitary ramble and consequent demise, a glance like the fullness of summer splendor gushed over me; the odor of flowers and of Eastern gums made all the atmosphere. I breathed the Orient, and lay drunk with balm, while that strange ship, a golden galley now, with glittering draperies festooned with flowers, paced to the measured beat of oars along the calm, and Cleopatra smiled alluringly from the great pageant's heart.

Was this a barge for summer waters, this peculiar ship I saw? It had a ruined dignity, a cumbersome grandeur, although its masts were shattered and its sails rent. It hung preternaturally still upon the sea, as if tormented and exhausted by long driving and drifting. I saw no sailors, but a great Spanish ensign floated over, and waved, a funeral plume. I knew it then. The armada was long since scattered; but, floating far

“on desolate, rainy seas,”

lost for centuries, and again restored to sight, here lay one of the fated ships of Spain. The huge galleon seemed to fill all the air, built up against the sky, like the gilded ships of Claude Lorraine against the sunset.

But it fled, for now a black flag fluttered at the mast head—a long, low vessel darted swiftly where the vast ship lay; there came a shrill piping whistle, the clash of cutlasses, fierce ringing oaths, sharp pistol cracks, the thunder of command, and over all the gusty yell of a demoniac chorus,

“My name was Robert Kidd, when I sailed.”

—There were no clouds longer, but under a serene sky I saw a bark moving with festal pomp, thronged with grave senators in flowing robes, and one with ducal bonnet in the midst, holding a ring. The smooth bark swam upon a sea like that of southern latitudes. I saw the *Bucentoro* and the nuptials of Venice and the Adriatic.

Who were those coming over the side? Who crowded the boats and sprang into the water, men in old Spanish armor, with plumes and swords, and bearing a glittering cross? Who was he standing upon the deck with folded arms and gazing toward the shore, as lovers on their mistresses, and martyrs upon heaven? Over what distant and tumultuous seas had this small craft escaped from other centuries and distant shores? What sounds of foreign hymns, forgotten now, were these, and what solemnity of debarkation? Was this grave form Columbus?

Yet these were not so Spanish as they seemed just now. This group of stern-faced men with

high-peaked hats, who knelt upon the cold deck and looked out upon a shore which, I could see by their joyless smile of satisfaction, was rough, and bare, and forbidding. In that soft afternoon, standing in mournful groups upon the small deck, why did they seem to me to be seeing the sad shores of wintry New England? That phantom-ship could not be the *Mayflower*!

I gazed long upon the shifting illusion.

"If I should board this ship," I asked myself, "where should I go? whom should I meet? what should I see? Is not this the vessel that shall carry me to my Europe, my foreign countries, my impossible India, the Atlantis that I have lost?"

As I sat staring at it I could not but wonder whether Bourne had seen this sail when he looked upon the water? Does he see such sights every day, because he lives here? Is it not perhaps a magic yacht of his; and does he slip off privately after business hours to Venice, and Spain, and Egypt, perhaps to El Dorado? Does he run races with Ptolemy Philopater, and Hiero of Syracuse, race regattas on fabulous seas?

Why not? He is a rich man, too, and why should not a New York merchant do what a Syracuse tyrant and an Egyptian prince did? Has Bourne's yacht those sumptuous chambers, like Philopater's galley, of which the greater part was made of split cedar, and of Milesian cypress; and has he twenty doors put together with beams of

citron-wood, with many ornaments? Has the roof of his cabin a carved golden face, and is his sail linen with a purple fringe?

"I suppose it is so," I said to myself, as I looked wistfully at the ship, which began to glimmer and melt in the haze.

"It certainly is not a fishing smack?" I asked doubtfully.

No, it must be Bourne's magic yacht; I was sure of it. I could not help laughing at poor old Hiero, whose cabins were divided into many rooms, with floors composed of mosaic work, of all kinds of stones tessellated. And, on this mosaic, the whole story of the Iliad was depicted in a marvelous manner. He had gardens "of all sorts of most wonderful beauty enriched with all sorts of plants, and shadowed by roofs of lead or tiles. And, besides this, there were tents roofed with boughs of white ivy and of the vine, the roots of which derived their moisture from casks full of earth, and were watered in the same manner as the gardens. There were temples, also, with doors of ivory and citron-wood, furnished in the most exquisite manner, with pictures and statues, and with goblets and vases of every form and shape imaginable."

"Poor Bourne!" I said, "I suppose his is finer than Hiero's, which is a thousand years old. Poor Bourne! I don't wonder that his eyes are weary, and that he would pay so dearly for a day

of leisure. Dear me ! is it one of the prices that must be paid for wealth, the keeping up a magic yacht ? ”

Involuntarily, I had asked the question aloud.

“The magic yacht is not Bourne’s,” answered a familiar voice. I looked up, and Titbottom stood by my side. “Do you not know that all Bourne’s money would not buy the yacht ? ” asked he. “He cannot even see it. And if he could, it would be no magic yacht to him, but only a battered and solitary hulk.”

The haze blew gently away, as Titbottom spoke, and there lay my Spanish galleon, my *Bucentoro*, my Cleopatra’s galley, Columbus’ *Santa Maria*, and the Pilgrim’s *Mayflower*, an old bleaching wreck upon the beach.

“Do you suppose any true love is in vain ? ” asked Titbottom solemnly, as he stood bare-headed and the soft sunset wind played with his few hairs. “Could Cleopatra smile upon Antony, and the moon upon Endymion, and the sea not love its lovers ? ”

The fresh air breathed upon our faces as he spoke. I might have sailed in Hiero’s ship, or in Roman galleys, had I lived centuries ago, and been born a nobleman. But would it be so sweet a remembrance, that of lying on a marble couch, under a golden-faced roof, and within doors of citron-wood and ivory, and sailing in that state to greet queens who are mummies now, as that of

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seeing those fair figures standing under the great gonfalon, themselves as lovely as Egyptian belles, and going to see more than Egypt dreamed?

The yacht was mine, then, and not Bourne's. I took Titbottom's arm, and we sauntered toward the ferry. What sumptuous sultan was I, with this sad vizier? My languid odalisque, the sea, lay at my feet as we advanced, and sparkled all over with a sunset smile. Had I trusted myself to her arms, to be borne to the realms that I shall never see, or sailed long voyages toward Cathay, I am not sure I should have brought a more precious present to Prue, than the story of that afternoon.

"Ought I to have gone alone?" I asked her, as I ended.

"I ought not to have gone with you," she replied, "for I had work to do. But how strange that you should see such things at Staten Island. I never did, Mr. Titbottom," said she, turning to my deputy, whom I had asked to tea.

"Madam," answered Titbottom, with a kind of wan and quaint dignity, so that I could not help thinking he must have arrived in that stray ship from the Spanish armada, "neither did Mr. Bourne."

TITBOTTOM'S SPECTACLES

"In my mind's eye, Horatio."

Hamlet.

PRUE and I do not entertain much ; our means forbid it. In truth, other people entertain for us. We enjoy that hospitality of which no account is made. We see the show, and hear the music, and smell the flowers, of great festivities, tasting, as it were, the drippings from rich dishes.

Our own dinner service is remarkably plain, our dinners, even on state occasions, are strictly in keeping, and almost our only guest is Titbottom. I buy a handful of roses as I come up from the office, perhaps, and Prue arranges them so prettily in a glass dish for the center of the table, that, even when I have hurried out to see Aurelia step into her carriage to go out to dine, I have thought that the bouquet she carried was not more beautiful because it was more costly.

I grant that it was more harmonious with her superb beauty and her rich attire. And I have no doubt that if Aurelia knew the old man whom she must have seen so often watching her, and his wife, who ornaments her sex with as much sweetness, although with less splendor, than Aurelia herself, she would also acknowledge that the nose-gay of roses was as fine and fit upon their table, as her own sumptuous bouquet is for herself. I

have so much faith in the perception of that lovely lady.

It is my habit — I hope I may say, my nature — to believe the best of people, rather than the worst. If I thought that all this sparkling setting of beauty, — this fine fashion, — these blazing jewels, and lustrous silks, and airy gauzes, embellished with gold-threaded embroidery and wrought in a thousand exquisite elaborations, so that I cannot see one of those lovely girls pass me by, without thanking God for the vision, — if I thought that this was all, and that, underneath her lace flounces and diamond bracelets, Aurelia was a sullen, selfish woman, then I should turn sadly homeward, for I should see that her jewels were flashing scorn upon the object they adorned, that her laces were of a more exquisite loveliness than the woman whom they merely touched with a superficial grace. It would be like a gayly decorated mausoleum, — bright to see, but silent and dark within.

“Great excellences, my dear Prue,” I sometimes allow myself to say, “lie concealed in the depths of character, like pearls at the bottom of the sea. Under the laughing, glancing surface, how little they are suspected ! Perhaps love is nothing else than the sight of them by one person. Hence every man’s mistress is apt to be an enigma to everybody else.

“I have no doubt that when Aurelia is engaged,

people will say she is a most admirable girl, certainly, but they cannot understand why any man should be in love with her. As if it were at all necessary that they should ! And her lover, like a boy who finds a pearl in the public street, and wonders as much that others did not see it as that he did, will tremble until he knows his passion is returned ; feeling, of course, that the whole world must be in love with this paragon, who cannot possibly smile upon anything so unworthy as he.

“I hope, therefore, my dear Mrs. Prue,” I continue, and my wife looks up, with pleased pride, from her work, as if I were such an irresistible humorist, “you will allow me to believe that the depth may be calm, although the surface is dancing. If you tell me that Aurelia is but a giddy girl, I shall believe that you think so. But I shall know, all the while, what profound dignity, and sweetness, and peace, lie at the foundation of her character.”

I say such things to Titbottom, during the dull season at the office. And I have known him sometimes to reply, with a kind of dry, sad humor, not as if he enjoyed the joke, but as if the joke must be made, that he saw no reason why I should be dull because the season was so.

“And what do I know of Aurelia, or any other girl ?” he says to me with that abstracted air, “I, whose Aurelias were of another century, and another zone.”

Then he falls into a silence which it seems quite profane to interrupt. But as we sit upon our high stools, at the desk, opposite each other, I leaning upon my elbows, and looking at him, he, with sidelong face, glancing out of the window, as if it commanded a boundless landscape, instead of a dim, dingy office court, I cannot refrain from saying :

“ Well ! ”

He turns slowly, and I go chatting on, — a little too loquacious, perhaps, about those young girls. But I know that Titbottom regards such an excess as venial, for his sadness is so sweet that you could believe it the reflection of a smile from long, long years ago.

One day, after I had been talking for a long time, and we had put up our books, and were preparing to leave, he stood for some time by the window, gazing with a drooping intentness, as if he really saw something more than the dark court, and said slowly : —

“ Perhaps you would have different impressions of things, if you saw them through my spectacles.”

There was no change in his expression. He still looked from the window, and I said : —

“ Titbottom, I did not know that you used glasses. I have never seen you wearing spectacles.”

“ No, I don’t often wear them. I am not very fond of looking through them. But sometimes an

irresistible necessity compels me to put them on, and I cannot help seeing."

Titbottom sighed.

"Is it so grievous a fate to see?" inquired I.

"Yes ; through my spectacles," he said, turning slowly, and looking at me with wan solemnity.

It grew dark as we stood in the office talking, and, taking our hats, we went out together. The narrow street of business was deserted. The heavy iron shutters were gloomily closed over the windows. From one or two offices struggled the dim gleam of an early candle, by whose light some perplexed accountant sat belated, and hunting for his error. A careless clerk passed, whistling. But the great tide of life had ebbed. We heard its roar far away, and the sound stole into that silent street like the murmur of the ocean into an inland dell.

"You will come and dine with us, Titbottom?"

He assented by continuing to walk with me, and I think we were both glad when we reached the house, and Prue came to meet us, saying:—

"Do you know, I hoped you would bring Mr. Titbottom to dine."

Titbottom smiled gently, and answered:—

"He might have brought his spectacles with him, and have been a happier man for it."

Prue looked a little puzzled.

"My dear," I said, "you must know that our friend, Mr. Titbottom, is the happy possessor of a

pair of wonderful spectacles. I have never seen them, indeed ; and, from what he says, I should be rather afraid of being seen by them. Most short-sighted persons are very glad to have the help of glasses ; but Mr. Titbottom seems to find very little pleasure in his."

"It is because they make him too far-sighted, perhaps," interrupted Prue, quietly, as she took the silver soup-ladle from the sideboard.

We sipped our wine after dinner, and Prue took her work. Can a man be too far-sighted ? I did not ask the question aloud. The very tone in which Prue had spoken convinced me that he might.

"At least," I said, "Mr. Titbottom will not refuse to tell us the history of his mysterious spectacles. I have known plenty of magic in eyes (and I glanced at the tender blue eyes of Prue), but I have not heard of any enchanted glasses."

"Yet you must have seen the glass in which your wife looks every morning, and, I take it, that glass must be daily enchanted," said Titbottom, with a bow of quaint respect to my wife.

I do not think I have seen such a blush upon Prue's cheek since — well, since a great many years ago.

"I will gladly tell you the history of my spectacles," began Titbottom. "It is very simple ; and I am not at all sure that a great many other people have not a pair of the same kind. I have

never, indeed, heard of them by the gross, like those of our young friend Moses, the son of the Vicar of Wakefield. In fact, I think a gross would be quite enough to supply the world. It is a kind of article for which the demand does not increase with use. If we should all wear spectacles like mine, we should never smile any more. Or — I am not quite sure — we should all be very happy.”

“A very important difference,” said Prue, counting her stitches.

“You know my grandfather Titbottom was a West Indian. A large proprietor, and an easy man, he basked in the tropical sun, leading his quiet, luxurious life. He lived much alone, and was what people called eccentric — by which I understand that he was very much himself, and, refusing the influence of other people, they had their revenges, and called him names. It is a habit not exclusively tropical. I think I have seen the same thing even in this city.

“But he was greatly beloved — my bland and bountiful grandfather. He was so large-hearted and open-handed. He was so friendly, and thoughtful, and genial that even his jokes had the air of graceful benedictions. He did not seem to grow old, and he was one of those who never appear to have been very young. He flourished in a perennial maturity, an immortal middle age.

“My grandfather lived upon one of the small

islands — St. Kitt's perhaps — and his domain extended to the sea. His house, a rambling West Indian mansion, was surrounded with deep, spacious piazzas, covered with luxurious lounges, among which one capacious chair was his peculiar seat. They tell me, he used sometimes to sit there for the whole day, his great, soft, brown eyes fastened upon the sea, watching the specks of sails that flashed upon the horizon, while the evanescent expressions chased each other over his placid face as if it reflected the calm and changing sea before him.

“His morning costume was an ample dressing-gown of gorgeously flowered silk, and his morning was very apt to last all day. He rarely read ; but he would pace the great piazza for hours, with his hands buried in the pockets of his dressing-gown, and an air of sweet reverie, which any book must be a very entertaining one to produce.

“Society, of course, he saw little. There was some slight apprehension that, if he were bidden to social entertainments, he might forget his coat, or arrive without some other essential part of his dress ; and there is a sly tradition in the Titbottom family that once, having been invited to a ball in honor of a new governor of the island, my grandfather Titbottom sauntered into the hall toward midnight wrapped in the gorgeous flowers of his dressing-gown, and with his hands buried in the pockets, as usual. There was great excitement

among the guests, and immense deprecation of gubernatorial ire. Fortunately, it happened that the governor and my grandfather were old friends, and there was no offense. But, as they were conversing together, one of the distressed managers cast indignant glances at the brilliant costume of my grandfather, who summoned him, and asked courteously : —

“ ‘Did you invite me, or my coat?’ ”

“ ‘You in a proper coat,’ replied the manager.

“ ‘The governor smiled approvingly, and looked at my grandfather.

“ ‘My friend,’ said he to the manager, ‘I beg your pardon, I forgot.’ ”

“ ‘The next day, my grandfather was seen promenading in full ball dress along the streets of the little town.

“ ‘ ‘They ought to know,’ said he, ‘that I have a proper coat, and that not contempt, nor poverty, but forgetfulness, sent me to a ball in my dressing-gown.’ ”

“ ‘He did not much frequent social festivals after this failure, but he always told the story with satisfaction and a quiet smile.

“ ‘To a stranger, life upon those little islands is uniform even to weariness. But the old native dons, like my grandfather, ripen in the prolonged sunshine, like the turtle upon the Bahama banks, nor know of existence more desirable. Life in the tropics I take to be a placid torpidity.

"During the long, warm mornings of nearly half a century, my grandfather Titbottom had sat in his dressing-gown, and gazed at the sea. But one calm June day, as he slowly paced the piazza after breakfast, his dreamy glance was arrested by a little vessel, evidently nearing the shore. He called for his spyglass, and, surveying the craft, saw that she came from the neighboring island. She glided smoothly, slowly, over the summer sea. The warm morning air was sweet with perfumes, and silent with heat. The sea sparkled languidly, and the brilliant blue sky hung cloudlessly over. Scores of little island vessels had my grandfather seen coming over the horizon, and cast anchor in the port. Hundreds of summer mornings had the white sails flashed and faded, like vague faces through forgotten dreams. But this time he laid down the spyglass, and leaned against a column of the piazza, and watched the vessel with an intentness that he could not explain. She came nearer and nearer, a graceful specter in the dazzling morning.

"'Decidedly, I must step down and see about that vessel,' said my grandfather Titbottom.

"He gathered his ample dressing gown about him, and stepped from the piazza, with no other protection from the sun than the little smoking-cap upon his head. His face wore a calm, beaming smile, as if he loved the whole world. He was not an old man ; but there was almost a patri-

archal pathos in his expression, as he sauntered along in the sunshine toward the shore. A group of idle gazers was collected, to watch the arrival. The little vessel furled her sails, and drifted slowly landward, and, as she was of very light draft, she came close to the shelving shore. A long plank was put out from her side, and the debarkation commenced.

“My grandfather Titbottom stood looking on, to see the passengers as they passed. There were but a few of them, and mostly traders from the neighboring island. But suddenly the face of a young girl appeared over the side of the vessel, and she stepped upon the plank to descend. My grandfather Titbottom instantly advanced, and, moving briskly, reached the top of the plank at the same moment, and with the gold tassel of his cap flashing in the sun, and one hand in the pocket of his dressing-gown, with the other he handed the young lady carefully down the plank. That young lady was afterward my grandmother Titbottom.

“For, over the gleaming sea which he had watched so long, and which seemed thus to reward his patient gaze, came his bride that sunny morning.

“‘Of course, we are happy,’ he used to say to her, after they were married: ‘for you are the gift of the sun I have loved so long and so well.’ And my grandfather Titbottom would lay his hand so tenderly upon the golden hair of his

young bride, that you could fancy him a devout Parsee,¹ caressing sunbeams.

“There were endless festivities upon occasion of the marriage ; and my grandfather did not go to one of them in his dressing-gown. The gentle sweetness of his wife melted every heart into love and sympathy. He was much older than she, without doubt. But age, as he used to say with a smile of immortal youth, is a matter of feeling, not of years.

“And if, sometimes, as she sat by his side on the piazza, her fancy looked through her eyes upon that summer sea, and saw a younger lover, perhaps some one of those graceful and glowing heroes who occupy the foreground of all young maidens’ visions by the sea, yet she could not find one more generous and gracious, nor fancy one more worthy and loving, than my grandfather Titbottom.

“And if, in the moonlit midnight, while he lay calmly sleeping, she leaned out of the window, and sank into vague reveries of sweet possibility, and watched the gleaming path of the moonlight upon the water, until the dawn glided over it, — it was only that mood of nameless regret and longing, which underlies all human happiness ; or it was the vision of that life of cities and the world, which she had never seen, but of which she had often read, and which looked very fair and allur-

¹ Because the Parsees are Sun-worshippers.

ing across the sea, to a girlish imagination, which knew that it should never see that reality.

"These West Indian years were the great days of the family," said Titbottom, with an air of majestic and regal regret, pausing, and musing, in our little parlor, like a late Stuart¹ in exile, remembering England.

Prue raised her eyes from her work, and looked at him with subdued admiration; for I have observed that, like the rest of her sex, she has a singular sympathy with the representative of a reduced family.

Perhaps it is their finer perception, which leads these tender-hearted women to recognize the divine right of social superiority so much more readily than we; and yet, much as Titbottom was enhanced in my wife's admiration by the discovery that his dusky sadness of nature and expression was, as it were, the expiring gleam and late twilight of ancestral splendors, I doubt if Mr. Bourne would have preferred him for bookkeeper a moment sooner upon that account. In truth, I have observed, down town, that the fact of your ancestors doing nothing is not considered good proof that you can do anything.

But Prue and her sex regard sentiment more than action, and I understand easily enough why she is never tired of hearing me read of Prince

¹ Like the Henry IX. of p. 201, elder brother of the Prince Charlie of p. 202.

Charlie. If Titbottom had been only a little younger, a little handsomer, a little more gallantly dressed — in fact a little more of a Prince Charlie, I am sure her eyes would not have fallen again upon her work so tranquilly, as he resumed his story.

“I can remember my grandfather Titbottom, although I was a very young child, and he was a very old man. My young mother and my young grandmother are very distinct figures in my memory, ministering to the old gentleman, wrapped in his dressing-gown, and seated upon the piazza. I remember his white hair, and his calm smile, and how, not long before he died, he called me to him, and laying his hand upon my head said to me : —

“‘My child, the world is not this great sunny piazza, nor life the fairy stories which the women tell you here, as you sit in their laps. I shall soon be gone, but I want to leave with you some memento of my love for you, and I know of nothing more valuable than these spectacles, which your grandmother brought from her native island, when she arrived here one fine summer morning, long ago. I cannot tell whether, when you grow older, you will regard them as a gift of the greatest value, or as something you had been happier never to have possessed.’

“‘But, grandpapa, I am not short-sighted.’

“‘My son, are you not human?’ said the old gentleman ; and how shall I ever forget the

thoughtful sadness with which, at the same time, he handed me the spectacles.

“Instinctively I put them on, and looked at my grandfather. But I saw no grandfather, no piazza, no flowered dressing-gown ; I saw only a luxuriant palm tree, waving broadly over a tranquil landscape ; pleasant homes clustered around it ; gardens teeming with fruit and flowers ; flocks quietly feeding ; birds wheeling and chirping. I heard children’s voices, and the low lullaby of happy mothers. The sound of cheerful singing came wafted from distant fields upon the light breeze. Golden harvests glistened out of sight, and I caught their rustling whispers of prosperity. A warm, yellow atmosphere bathed the whole.

“I have seen copies of the landscapes of the Italian painter Claude, which seemed to me faint reminiscences of that calm and happy vision. But all this peace and prosperity seemed to flow from the spreading palm as from a fountain.

“I do not know how long I looked, but I had, apparently, no power, as I had no will, to remove the spectacles. What a wonderful island must Nevis be, thought I, if people carry such pictures in their pockets, only by buying a pair of spectacles ! What wonder that my dear grandmother Titbottom has lived such a placid life, and has blessed us all with her sunny temper, where she has lived surrounded by such images of peace !

“My grandfather died. But still, in the warm

morning sunshine upon the piazza, I felt his placid presence, and as I crawled into his great chair, and drifted on in reverie through the still tropical day, it was as if his soft dreamy eye had passed into my soul. My grandmother cherished his memory with tender regret. A violent passion of grief for his loss was no more possible than for the pensive decay of the year.

“We have no portrait of him, but I see always, when I remember him, that peaceful and luxuriant palm. And I think to have known one good old man — one man who, through the chances and rubs of a long life, has carried his heart in his hand, like a palm branch, waving all discords into peace — helps our faith in God, in ourselves, and in each other, more than many sermons. I hardly know whether to be grateful to my grandfather for the spectacles ; and yet when I remember that it is to them I owe the pleasant image of him which I cherish, I seem to myself sadly ungrateful.

“Madam,” said Titbottom to Prue, solemnly, “my memory is a long and gloomy gallery, and only remotely, at its further end, do I see the glimmer of soft sunshine, and only there are the pleasant pictures hung. They seem to me very happy along whose gallery the sunlight streams to their very feet, striking all the pictured walls into unfading splendor.”

Prue had laid her work in her lap, and as Titbottom paused a moment, and I turned toward

her, I found her mild eyes fastened upon my face, and glistening with many tears. I knew that the tears meant that she felt herself to be one of those who seemed to Titbottom very happy.

“Misfortunes of many kinds came heavily upon the family after the head was gone. The great house was relinquished. My parents were both dead, and my grandmother had entire charge of me. But from the moment that I received the gift of the spectacles, I could not resist their fascination, and I withdrew into myself, and became a solitary boy. There were not many companions for me of my own age, and they gradually left me, or, at least, had not a hearty sympathy with me; for, if they teased me, I pulled out my spectacles and surveyed them so seriously that they acquired a kind of awe of me, and evidently regarded my grandfather's gift as a concealed magical weapon which might be dangerously drawn upon them at any moment. Whenever, in our games, there were quarrels and high words, and I began to feel about my dress and to wear a grave look, they all took the alarm, and shouted, ‘Look out for Titbottom's spectacles,’ and scattered like a flock of scared sheep.

“Nor could I wonder at it. For, at first, before they took the alarm, I saw strange sights when I looked at them through the glasses.

“If two were quarreling about a marble or a ball, I had only to go behind a tree where I was

concealed and look at them leisurely. Then the scene changed, and it was no longer a green meadow with boys playing, but a spot which I did not recognize, and forms that made me shudder, or smile. It was not a big boy bullying a little one, but a young wolf with glistening teeth and a lamb cowering before him; or it was a dog faithful and famishing — or a star going slowly into eclipse — or a rainbow fading — or a flower blooming — or a sun rising — or a waning moon.

“The revelations of the spectacles determined my feeling for the boys, and for all whom I saw through them. No shyness, nor awkwardness, nor silence, could separate me from those who looked lovely as lilies to my illuminated eyes. But the vision made me afraid. If I felt myself warmly drawn to any one, I struggled with the fierce desire of seeing him through the spectacles, for I feared to find him something else than I fancied. I longed to enjoy the luxury of ignorant feeling, to love without knowing, to float like a leaf upon the eddies of life, drifted now to a sunny point, now to a solemn shade — now over glittering ripples, now over gleaming calms, — and not to determined ports, a trim vessel with an inexorable rudder.

“But sometimes, mastered after long struggles, as if the unavoidable condition of owning the spectacles were using them, I seized them and sauntered into the little town. Putting them to

my eyes, I peered into the houses and at the people who passed me. Here sat a family at breakfast, and I stood at the window looking in. O motley meal! fantastic vision! The good mother saw her lord sitting opposite, a grave, respectable being, eating muffins. But I saw only a bank-bill, more or less crumpled and tattered, marked with a larger or lesser figure. If a sharp wind blew suddenly, I saw it tremble and flutter; it was thin, flat, impalpable. I removed my glasses, and looked with my eyes at the wife. I could have smiled to see the humid tenderness with which she regarded her strange *vis-à-vis*. Is life only a game of blindman's buff? of droll cross-purposes?

"Or I put them on again, and then looked at the wives. How many stout trees I saw,—how many tender flowers,—how many placid pools; yes, and how many little streams winding out of sight, shrinking before the large, hard, round eyes opposite, and slipping off into solitude and shade, with a low, inner song for their own solace.

"In many houses I thought to see angels, nymphs, or, at least, women, and could only find broomsticks, mops, or kettles, hurrying about, rattling and tinkling, in a state of shrill activity. I made calls upon elegant ladies, and after I had enjoyed the gloss of silk, and the delicacy of lace, and the glitter of jewels, I slipped on my spec-

tacles, and saw a peacock's feather, flounced, and furbelowed, and fluttering ; or an iron rod, thin, sharp, and hard ; nor could I possibly mistake the movement of the drapery for any flexibility of the thing draped.

“Or, mysteriously chilled, I saw a statue of perfect form, or flowing movement, it might be alabaster, or bronze, or marble, — but sadly often it was ice ; and I knew that after it had shone a little, and frozen a few eyes with its despairing perfection, it could not be put away in the niches of palaces for ornament and proud family tradition, like the alabaster, or bronze, or marble statues, but would melt, and shrink, and fall coldly away in colorless and useless water, be absorbed in the earth and utterly forgotten.

“But the true sadness was rather in seeing those who, not having the spectacles, thought that the iron rod was flexible, and the ice statue warm. I saw many a gallant heart, which seemed to me brave and loyal as the crusaders, pursuing, through days and nights, and a long life of devotion, the hope of lighting at least a smile in the cold eyes, if not a fire in the icy heart. I watched the earnest, enthusiastic sacrifice. I saw the pure resolve, the generous faith, the fine scorn of doubt, the impatience of suspicion. I watched the grace, the ardor, the glory of devotion. Through those strange spectacles how often I saw the noblest heart renouncing all other hope, all other ambi-

tion, all other life, than the possible love of some one of those statues.

“Ah ! me, it was terrible, but they had not the love to give. The face was so polished and smooth, because there was no sorrow in the heart, — and drearily, often, no heart to be touched. I could not wonder that the noble heart of devotion was broken, for it had dashed itself against a stone. I wept, until my spectacles were dimmed, for those hopeless lovers ; but there was a pang beyond tears for those icy statues.

“Still a boy, I was thus too much a man in knowledge, — I did not comprehend the sights I was compelled to see. I used to tear my glasses away from my eyes, and, frightened at myself, run to escape my own consciousness. Reaching the small house where we then lived, I plunged into my grandmother’s room, and, throwing myself upon the floor, buried my face in her lap ; and sobbed myself to sleep with premature grief.

“But when I awakened, and felt her cool hand upon my hot forehead, and heard the low sweet song, or the gentle story, or the tenderly told parable from the Bible, with which she tried to soothe me, I could not resist the mystic fascination that lured me, as I lay in her lap, to steal a glance at her through the spectacles.

“Pictures of the Madonna have not her rare and pensive beauty. Upon the tranquil little islands her life had been eventless, and all the

fine possibilities of her nature were like flowers that never bloomed. Placid were all her years ; yet I have read of no heroine, of no woman great in sudden crises, that it did not seem to me she might have been. The wife and widow of a man who loved his home better than the homes of others, I have yet heard of no queen, no belle, no imperial beauty, whom in grace, and brilliancy, and persuasive courtesy she might not have surpassed.

“Madam,” said Titbottom to my wife, whose heart hung upon his story, “your husband’s young friend, Aurelia, wears sometimes a camellia in her hair, and no diamond in the ball-room seems so costly as that perfect flower, which women envy, and for whose least and withered petal men sigh ; yet, in the tropical solitudes of Brazil, how many a camellia bud drops from the bush that no eye has ever seen, which, had it flowered and been noticed, would have gilded all hearts with its memory.

“When I stole these furtive glances at my grandmother, half fearing that they were wrong, I saw only a calm lake, whose shores were low, and over which the sun hung unbroken, so that the least star was clearly reflected. It had an atmosphere of solemn twilight tranquillity, and so completely did its unruffled surface blend with the cloudless, star-studded sky, that, when I looked through my spectacles at my grand-

mother, the vision seemed to me all heaven and stars.

"Yet, as I gazed and gazed, I felt what stately cities might well have been built upon those shores, and have flashed prosperity over the calm, like coruscations of pearls. I dreamed of gorgeous fleets, silken-sailed, and blown by perfumed winds, drifting over those depthless waters and through those spacious skies. I gazed upon the twilight, the inscrutable silence, like a God-fearing discoverer upon a new and vast sea bursting upon him through forest glooms, and in the fervor of whose impassioned gaze a millennial and poetic world arises, and man need no longer die to be happy.

"My companions naturally deserted me, for I had grown wearily grave and abstracted: and, unable to resist the allurements of my spectacles, I was constantly lost in the world, of which those companions were part, yet of which they knew nothing.

"I grew cold and hard, almost morose; people seemed to me so blind and unreasonable. They did the wrong thing. They called green, yellow; and black, white. Young men said of a girl, 'What a lovely, simple creature!' I looked, and there was only a glistening wisp of straw, dry and hollow. Or they said, 'What a cold, proud beauty!' I looked, and lo! a Madonna, whose heart held the world. Or they said, 'What a

wild, giddy girl!’ and I saw a glancing, dancing mountain stream, pure as the virgin snows whence it flowed, singing through sun and shade, over pearls and gold dust, slipping along unstained by weed or rain, or heavy foot of cattle, touching the flowers with a dewy kiss,—a beam of grace, a happy song, a line of light, in the dim and troubled landscape.

“My grandmother sent me to school, but I looked at the master, and saw that he was a smooth, round ferule, or an improper noun, or a vulgar fraction, and refused to obey him. Or he was a piece of string, a rag, a willow wand, and I had a contemptuous pity. But one was a well of cool, deep water, and looking suddenly in, one day, I saw the stars.

“That one gave me all my schooling. With him I used to walk by the sea, and, as we strolled and the waves plunged in long legions before us, I looked at him through the spectacles, and as his eyes dilated with the boundless view, and his chest heaved with an impossible desire, I saw Xerxes and his army, tossed and glittering, rank upon rank, multitude upon multitude, out of sight, but ever regularly advancing, and, with confused roar of ceaseless music, prostrated themselves in abject homage. Or, as with arms outstretched and hair streaming on the wind, he chanted full lines of the resounding Iliad, I saw Homer pacing the Egean sands of the Greek sunsets of forgotten times.

“My grandmother died, and I was thrown into the world without resources, and with no capital but my spectacles. I tried to find employment, but everybody was shy of me. There was a vague suspicion that I was either a little crazed, or a good deal in league with the prince of darkness. My companions, who would persist in calling a piece of painted muslin a fair and fragrant flower, had no difficulty; success waited for them around every corner, and arrived in every ship.

“I tried to teach, for I loved children. But if anything excited a suspicion of my pupils, and putting on my spectacles, I saw that I was fondling a snake, or smelling at a bud with a worm in it, I sprang up in horror and ran away; or, if it seemed to me, through the glasses, that a cherub smiled upon me, or a rose was blooming in my button-hole, then I felt myself imperfect and impure, not fit to be leading and training what was so essentially superior to myself, and I kissed the children and left them weeping and wondering.

“In despair I went to a great merchant on the island, and asked him to employ me.

“‘My dear young friend,’ said he, ‘I understand that you have some singular secret, some charm, or spell, or amulet, or something, I don’t know what, of which people are afraid. Now, you know, my dear,’ said the merchant, swelling up, and apparently prouder of his great stomach than of his large fortune, ‘I am not of that kind. I am

not easily frightened. You may spare yourself the pain of trying to impose upon me. People who propose to come to time before I arrive, are accustomed to arise very early in the morning,' said he, thrusting his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and spreading the fingers like two fans, upon his bosom. 'I think I have heard something of your secret. You have a pair of spectacles, I believe, that you value very much, because your grandmother brought them as a marriage portion to your grandfather. Now, if you think fit to sell me those spectacles, I will pay you the largest market price for them. What do you say?'

"I told him I had not the slightest idea of selling my spectacles.

"My young friend means to eat them, I suppose,' said he, with a contemptuous smile.

"I made no reply, but was turning to leave the office, when the merchant called after me :—

"My young friend, poor people should never suffer themselves to get into pets. Anger is an expensive luxury, in which only men of a certain income can indulge. A pair of spectacles and a hot temper are not the most promising capital for success in life, Master Titbottom.'

"I said nothing, but put my hand upon the door to go out, when the merchant said more respectfully :—

"Well, you foolish boy, if you will not sell

your spectacles, perhaps you will agree to sell the use of them to me. 'That is, you shall only put them on when I direct you, and for my purposes. Hallo! you little fool!' cried he, impatiently, as he saw that I intended to make no reply.

"But I had pulled out my spectacles and put them on for my own purposes, and against his wish and desire. I looked at him, and saw a huge, bald-headed, wild boar, with gross chaps and a leering eye — only the more ridiculous for the high-arch, gold-bowed spectacles that straddled his nose. One of his fore-hoofs was thrust into the safe, where his bills receivable were hived, and the other into his pocket, among the loose change and bills there. His ears were pricked forward with a brisk, sensitive smartness. In a world where prize pork was the best excellence, he would have carried off all the premiums.

"I stepped into the next office in the street, and a mild-faced, genial man, also a large and opulent merchant, asked me my business in such a tone, that I instantly looked through my spectacles, and saw a land flowing with milk and honey. There I pitched my tent, and stayed till the good man died, and his business was discontinued.

"But while there," said Titbottom, and his voice trembled away into a sigh, "I first saw Preciosa. Despite the spectacles, I saw Preciosa. For days, for weeks, for months, I did not take my spectacles with me. I ran away from them,

I threw them up on high shelves, I tried to make up my mind to throw them into the sea, or down the well. I could not, I would not, I dared not look at Preciosa through the spectacles. It was not possible for me deliberately to destroy them; but I awoke in the night, and could almost have cursed my dear old grandfather for his gift.

"I sometimes escaped from the office, and sat for whole days with Preciosa. I told her the strange things I had seen with my mystic glasses. The hours were not enough for the wild romances which I raved in her ear. She listened, astonished and appalled. Her blue eyes turned upon me with sweet deprecation. She clung to me and then withdrew, and fled fearfully from the room.

"But she could not stay away. She could not resist my voice, in whose tones burnt all the love that filled my heart and brain. The very effort to resist the desire of seeing her as I saw everybody else, gave a frenzy and an unnatural tension to my feeling and my manner. I sat by her side, looking into her eyes, smoothing her hair, folding her to my heart, which was sunken deep and deep — why not forever? — in that dream of peace. I ran from her presence, and shouted, and leaped with joy, and sat the whole night through, thrilled into happiness by the thought of her love and loveliness, like a wind-harp, tightly strung, and answering the airiest sigh of the breeze with music. .

"Then came calmer days—the conviction of deep love settled upon our lives—as after the hurrying, heaving days of spring comes the bland and benignant summer.

"‘It is no dream, then, after all, and we are happy,’ I said to her, one day; and there came no answer, for happiness is speechless.

"‘We are happy, then,’ I said to myself, ‘there is no excitement now. How glad I am that I can now look at her through my spectacles.’

"I feared lest some instinct should warn me to beware. I escaped from her arms, and ran home and seized the glasses, and bounded back again to Preciosa. As I entered the room I was heated, my head was swimming with confused apprehensions, my eyes must have glared. Preciosa was frightened, and rising from her seat, stood with an inquiring glance of surprise in her eyes.

"But I was bent with frenzy upon my purpose. I was merely aware that she was in the room. I saw nothing else. I heard nothing. I cared for nothing, but to see her through that magic glass, and feel at once all the fullness of blissful perfection which that would reveal. Preciosa stood before the mirror, but alarmed at my wild and eager movements, unable to distinguish what I had in my hands, and seeing me raise them suddenly to my face, she shrieked with terror, and fell fainting upon the floor, at the very moment that I placed the glasses before my eyes, and beheld—*myself*,

reflected in the mirror, before which she had been standing.

“Dear madam,” cried Titbottom, to my wife, springing up and falling back again in his chair, pale and trembling, while Prue ran to him and took his hand, and I poured out a glass of water — “I saw myself.”

There was silence for many minutes. Prue laid her hands gently upon the head of our guest, whose eyes were closed, and who breathed softly like an infant in sleeping. Perhaps, in all the long years of anguish since that hour, no tender hand had touched his brow, nor wiped away the damps of a bitter sorrow. Perhaps the tender, maternal fingers of my wife soothed his weary head with the conviction that he felt the hand of his mother playing with the long hair of her boy in the soft West India morning. Perhaps it was only the natural relief of expressing a pent-up sorrow.

When he spoke again, it was with the old subdued tone, and the air of quaint solemnity.

“These things were matters of long, long ago, and I came to this country soon after. I brought with me, premature age, a past of melancholy memories, and the magic spectacles. I had become their slave. I had nothing more to fear. Having seen myself, I was compelled to see others, properly to understand my relations to them. The lights that cheer the future of other men had gone out

for me; my eyes were those of an exile turned backwards upon the receding shore, and not forwards with hope upon the ocean.

"I mingled with men, but with little pleasure. There are but many varieties of a few types. I did not find those I came to clearer sighted than those I had left behind. I heard men called shrewd and wise, and report said they were highly intelligent and successful. My finest sense detected no aroma of purity and principle; but I saw only a fungus that had flattened and spread in a night. They went to the theaters to see actors upon the stage. I went to see actors in the boxes, so consummately cunning, that others did not know they were acting, and they did not suspect it themselves.

"Perhaps you wonder it did not make me misanthropical. My dear friends, do not forget that I had seen myself. That made me compassionate, not cynical.

"Of course, I could not value highly the ordinary standards of success and excellence. When I went to church and saw a thin, blue, artificial flower, or a great sleepy cushion, expounding the beauty of holiness to pews full of eagles, half-eagles, and three-pences, however adroitly concealed they might be in broadcloth and boots, or saw an onion in an Easter bonnet weeping over the sins of Magdalen, I did not feel as they felt who saw in all this, not only propriety, but piety.

“Or when at public meetings an eel stood up on end, and wriggled and squirmed lithely in every direction, and declared that, for his part, he went in for rainbows and hot water, — how could I help seeing that he was still black and loved a slimy pool?

“I could not grow misanthropical when I saw in the eyes of so many who were called old, the gushing fountains of eternal youth, and the light of an immortal dawn, or when I saw those who were esteemed unsuccessful and aimless, ruling a fair realm of peace and plenty, either in their own hearts, or in another’s — a realm and princely possession for which they had well renounced a hopeless search and a belated triumph.

“I knew one man who had been for years a byword for having sought the philosopher’s stone. But I looked at him through the spectacles and saw a satisfaction in concentrated energies and a tenacity arising from devotion to a noble dream which was not apparent in the youths who pitied him in the aimless effeminacy of clubs, nor in the clever gentlemen who cracked their thin jokes upon him over a gossiping dinner.

“And there was your neighbor over the way, who passes for a woman who has failed in her career, because she is an old maid. People wag solemn heads of pity, and say that she made so great a mistake in not marrying the brilliant and famous man who was for long years her suitor.

It is clear that no orange flower will ever bloom for her. The young people make their tender romances about her as they watch her, and think of her solitary hours of bitter regret and wasting longing, never to be satisfied.

“When I first came to town I shared this sympathy, and pleased my imagination with fancying her hard struggle with the conviction that she had lost all that made life beautiful. I supposed that if I had looked at her through my spectacles, I should see that it was only her radiant temper which so illuminated her dress, that we did not see it to be heavy sables.

“But when, one day, I did raise my glasses, and glanced at her, I did not see the old maid whom we all pitied for a secret sorrow, but a woman whose nature was a tropic, in which the sun shone, and birds sang, and flowers bloomed forever. There were no regrets, no doubts and half wishes, but a calm sweetness, a transparent peace. I saw her blush when that old lover passed by, or paused to speak to her, but it was only the sign of delicate feminine consciousness. She knew his love, and honored it, although she could not understand it nor return it. I looked closely at her, and I saw that, although the world had exclaimed at her indifference to such homage, and had declared it was astonishing she should lose so fine a match, she would only say simply and quietly : —

“‘If Shakespeare loved me and I did not love him, how could I marry him?’

“Could I be misanthropical when I saw such fidelity, and dignity, and simplicity?

“You may believe that I was especially curious to look at that old lover of hers through my glasses. He was no longer young, you know, when I came, and his fame and fortune were secure. Certainly I have heard of few men more beloved, and of none more worthy to be loved. He had the easy manner of a man of the world, the sensitive grace of a poet, and the charitable judgment of a wide traveler. He was accounted the most successful and most unspoiled of men. Handsome, brilliant, wise, tender, graceful, accomplished, rich, and famous, I looked at him, without the spectacles, in surprise and admiration, and wondered how your neighbor over the way had been so entirely untouched by his homage. I watched their intercourse in society, I saw her gay smile, her cordial greeting; I marked his frank address, his lofty courtesy. Their manner told no tales. The eager world was balked, and I pulled out my spectacles.

“I had seen her already, and now I saw him. He lived only in memory, and his memory was a spacious and stately palace. But he did not oftenest frequent the banqueting hall, where were endless hospitality and feasting,—nor did he loiter much in the reception rooms, where a throng of

new visitors was forever swarming, — nor did he feed his vanity by haunting the apartment in which were stored the trophies of his varied triumphs, — nor dream much in the great gallery hung with pictures of his travels.

“From all these lofty halls of memory he constantly escaped to a remote and solitary chamber, into which no one had ever penetrated. But my fatal eyes, behind the glasses, followed and entered with him, and saw that the chamber was a chapel. It was dim, and silent, and sweet with perpetual incense, that burned upon an altar before a picture forever veiled. There, whenever I chanced to look, I saw him kneel and pray; and there, by day and by night, a funeral hymn was chanted.

“I do not believe you will be surprised that I have been content to remain a deputy bookkeeper. My spectacles regulated my ambition, and I early learned that there were better gods than Plutus. The glasses have lost much of their fascination now, and I do not often use them. But sometimes the desire is irresistible. Whenever I am greatly interested, I am compelled to take them out and see what it is that I admire.

“And yet — and yet,” said Titbottom, after a pause, “I am not sure that I thank my grandfather.”

Prue had long since laid away her work, and had heard every word of the story. I saw that the dear woman had yet one question to ask, and

had been earnestly hoping to hear something that would spare her the necessity of asking. But Titbottom had resumed his usual tone, after the momentary excitement, and made no further allusion to himself. We all sat silently; Titbottom's eyes fastened musingly upon the carpet, Prue looking wistfully at him, and I regarding both.

It was past midnight, and our guest arose to go. He shook hands quietly, made his grave Spanish bow to Prue, and, taking his hat, went toward the front door. Prue and I accompanied him. I saw in her eyes that she would ask her question. And as Titbottom opened the door, I heard the low words:—

“And Preciosa?”

Titbottom paused. He had just opened the door, and the moonlight streamed over him as he stood, turning back to us.

“I have seen her but once since. It was in church, and she was kneeling, with her eyes closed, so that she did not see me. But I rubbed the glasses well, and looked at her, and saw a white lily, whose stem was broken, but which was fresh, and luminous, and fragrant still.”

“That was a miracle,” interrupted Prue.

“Madam, it was a miracle,” replied Titbottom, “and for that one sight I am devoutly grateful for my grandfather's gift. I saw that, although a flower may have lost its hold upon earthly

moisture, it may still bloom as sweetly, fed by the dews of heaven."

The door closed, and he was gone. But as Prue put her arm in mine, and we went upstairs together, she whispered in my ear : —

"How glad I am that you don't wear spectacles."

What did Curtis mean by those spectacles?

It is a thankless task to explain what should be obvious to every one, and it is not a very certain benefit to explain a poem that may not quite explain itself. A poem is not merely a thought. We are too apt to think that if we seize the thought and make it clear-cut in our mind and definite, we shall have the chief thing in the poem : too often we have thus missed the chief thing, for we have lost the poetic atmosphere and feeling. We must not be too eager to reduce poetry to thought. Now an allegory is poetical in character, and this story of Titbottom's spectacles is allegorical. We must, therefore, touch it gently. Still it seems to us that it is very possible that at a first reading one will not get the full intent of the writer. To get the full intent, do we not need more than a recollection of that series of pictures that Titbottom saw? Do we not need the idea that lies at bottom?

What did Titbottom see through his spectacles? did he see the truth? Surely not abstract truth. Instead of his grandfather, he saw the calm peace of West Indian life; instead of his grandmother, he saw the tranquil peace of the lake at twilight; instead of the man of business, he saw a wild boar with gold spectacles; instead of Preciosa, he saw the broken lily with miraculous life. Instead of each thing as it appeared to the world, he saw it as something else; not as it was, but otherwise. Shall we call that seeing the truth?

Perhaps we may not at first think that it is, and yet we should probably admit that Titbottom looked beneath the surface and saw life more as it truly was. That man of business, for instance; we feel that we get more of his true nature when we think of him as the cruel and ravenous boar than when we think of him in his general human appearance in a coat and trousers. Other men who were outwardly like him were very different at heart, and Tit-

bottom's glasses showed him the difference. So of Preciosa when he looked at her. Outwardly she looked like any beautiful woman who is absorbed in religious contemplation. But as Titbottom knew, some such were merely onions in Easter bonnets. When Titbottom looked at Preciosa, he saw that she had all the purity and beauty and vitality of the lily, and that she had all these although her life was broken in two.

But if Titbottom saw the truth, he saw it as a poet; he saw it in picture, not in sentence; he saw it in image, not in thought. Perhaps the story itself is a caution not to be satisfied with understanding it.

FROM "MY STUDY WINDOWS"



EMERSON THE LECTURER¹

It is a singular fact, that Mr. Emerson is the most steadily attractive lecturer in America. Into that somewhat cold-waterish region adventurers of the sensational kind come down now and then with a splash, to become disregarded King Logs before the next season. But Mr. Emerson always draws. A lecturer now² for something like a third of a century, one of the pioneers of the lecturing system, the charm of his voice, his manner, and his matter has never lost its power over his earlier hearers, and continually winds new ones in its enchanting meshes. What they do not fully understand they take on trust, and

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² This essay was written, as appears later, in 1868, when it was still common for eminent men of letters to use the lecture-platform as a means of publication. We do not now often think of Emerson as a lecturer: his lectures have become essays. But Lowell has so exactly hit the true spirit of Emerson that his criticism is almost as useful as it was on the day it was written.

listen, saying to themselves, as the old poet of Sir Philip Sidney:—

“A sweet, attractive, kind of grace,
A full assurance given by looks,
Continual comfort in a face,
The lineaments of gospel books.”

We call it a singular fact, because we Yankees are thought to be fond of the spread-eagle style, and nothing can be more remote from that than his. We are reckoned a practical folk, who would rather hear about a new air-tight stove than about Plato; yet our favorite teacher's practicality is not in the least of the Poor Richard¹ variety. If he have any Buncombe constituency, it is that unrealized commonwealth of philosophers which Plotinus proposed to establish; and if he were to make an almanac, his directions to farmers would be something like this: “OCTOBER: *Indian Summer*; now is the time to get in your early Vedas.”² What, then, is his secret? Is it not that he out-Yankees us all? that his range includes us all? that he is equally at home with the potato-disease and original sin, with pegging shoes and the Over-soul?³ that, as we try all trades, so has he tried all cultures? and above all, that his mysticism gives us a counterpoise to our super-practicality?

¹ Into whose mouth Franklin put the practical wisdom for which he was famous.

² Sacred books of the East.

³ The title of one of Emerson's essays.

There is no man living to whom, as a writer, so many of us feel and thankfully acknowledge so great an indebtedness for ennobling impulses,—none whom so many cannot abide. What does he mean? ask these last. Where is his system? What is the use of it all? What the deuce have we to do with Brahma?¹ I do not propose to write an essay on Emerson at this time. I will only say that one may find grandeur and consolation in a starlit night without caring to ask what it means, save grandeur and consolation; one may like Montaigne, as some ten generations before us have done, without thinking him so systematic as some more eminently tedious (or shall we say tediously eminent?) authors; one may think roses as good in their way as cabbages, though the latter would make a better show in the witness-box, if cross-examined as to their usefulness; and as for Brahma, why, he can take care of himself, and won't bite us at any rate.

The bother with Mr. Emerson is, that, though he writes in prose, he is essentially a poet. If you undertake to paraphrase what he says, and to reduce it to words of one syllable for infant minds, you will make as sad work of it as the good monk with his analysis of Homer in the "*Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*."² We look

¹ One of Emerson's poems is on Brahma.

² "*Epistles of Obscure Men*," a famous series of satires during the Reformation.

upon him as one of the few men of genius whom our age has produced, and there needs no better proof of it than his masculine faculty of fecundating other minds. Search for his eloquence in his books and you will perchance miss it, but meanwhile you will find that it has kindled all your thoughts. For choice and pith of language he belongs to a better age than ours, and might rub shoulders with Fuller and Browne, — though he does use that abominable word *reliable*. His eye for a fine, telling phrase that will carry true is like that of a backwoodsman for a rifle; and he will dredge you up a choice word from the mud of Cotton Mather himself. A diction at once so rich and so homely as his I know not where to match in these days of writing by the page; it is like homespun cloth-of-gold. The many cannot miss his meaning, and only the few can find it. It is the open secret of all true genius. It is wholesome to angle in those profound pools, though one be rewarded with nothing more than the leap of a fish that flashes his freckled side in the sun and as suddenly absconds in the dark and dreamy waters again. There is keen excitement, though there be no ponderable acquisition. If we carry nothing home in our baskets, there is ample gain in dilated lungs and stimulated blood. What does he mean, quotha? He means inspiring hints, a divining-rod to your deeper nature. No doubt, Emerson, like all origi-

nal men, has his peculiar audience, and yet I know none that can hold a promiscuous crowd in pleased attention so long as he. As in all original men, there is something for every palate. "Would you know," says Goethe, "the ripest cherries? Ask the boys and the blackbirds."

The announcement that such a pleasure as a new course of lectures by him is coming, to people as old as I am, is something like those forebodings of spring that prepare us every year for a familiar novelty, none the less novel, when it arrives, because it is familiar. We know perfectly well what we are to expect from Mr. Emerson, and yet what he says always penetrates and stirs us, as is apt to be the case with genius, in a very unlooked-for fashion. Perhaps genius is one of the few things which we gladly allow to repeat itself, — one of the few that multiply rather than weaken the force of their impression by iteration? Perhaps some of us hear more than the mere words, are moved by something deeper than the thoughts? If it be so, we are quite right, for it is thirty years and more of "plain living and high thinking"¹ that speak to us in this altogether unique lay-preacher. We have shared in the beneficence of this varied culture, this fearless impartiality in criticism and speculation, this masculine sincerity, this sweetness of nature which

¹ A phrase from one of Wordsworth's sonnets, taken as a motto by New England culture.

rather stimulates than cloy, for a generation long. If ever there was a standing testimonial to the cumulative power and value of Character (and we need it sadly in these days), we have it in this gracious and dignified presence. What an antiseptic is a pure life! At sixty-five (or two years beyond his grand climacteric, as he would prefer to call it) he has that privilege of soul which abolishes the calendar, and presents him to us always the unwasted contemporary of his own prime. I do not know if he seem old to his younger hearers, but we who have known him so long wonder at the tenacity with which he maintains himself even in the outposts of youth. I suppose it is not the Emerson of 1868 to whom we listen. For us the whole life of the man is distilled in the clear drop of every sentence, and behind each word we divine the force of a noble character, the weight of a large capital of thinking and being. We do not go to hear what Emerson says so much as to hear Emerson. Not that we perceive any falling-off in anything that ever was essential to the charm of Mr. Emerson's peculiar style of thought or phrase. The first lecture, to be sure, was more disjointed even than common. It was as if, after vainly trying to get his paragraphs into sequence and order, he had at last tried the desperate expedient of *shuffling* them. It was chaos come again, but it was a chaos full of shooting-stars, a jumble of

creative forces. The second lecture, on "Criticism and Poetry," was quite up to the level of old times, full of that power of strangely subtle association whose indirect approaches startle the mind into almost painful attention, of those flashes of mutual understanding between speaker and hearer that are gone ere one can say it lightens. The vice of Emerson's criticism seems to be, that while no man is so sensitive to what is poetical, few men are less sensible than he of what makes a poem. He values the solid meaning of thought above the subtler meaning of style. He would prefer Donne, I suspect, to Spenser, and sometimes mistakes the queer for the original.

To be young is surely the best, if the most precarious, gift of life; yet there are some of us who would hardly consent to be young again, if it were at the cost of our recollection of Mr. Emerson's first lectures during the consulate of Van Buren.¹ We used to walk in from the country to the Masonic Temple (I think it was), through the crisp winter night, and listen to that thrilling voice of his, so charged with subtle meaning and subtle music, as shipwrecked men on a raft to the hail of a ship that came with unhopèd-for food and rescue. Cynics might say what they liked. Did our own imaginations transfigure dry remainder-biscuit into

¹ A reminiscence of a phrase (*consule Planco*) in which Horace refers to his youth. Van Buren was President from 1837 to 1841, when Lowell was just out of college.

ambrosia? At any rate he brought us *life*, which, on the whole, is no bad thing. Was it all transcendentalism? magic-lantern pictures on mist? As you will. Those, then, were just what we wanted. But it was not so. The delight and the benefit were that he put us in communication with a larger style of thought, sharpened our wits with a more pungent phrase, gave us ravishing glimpses of an ideal under the dry husk of our New England; made us conscious of the supreme and everlasting originality of whatever bit of soul might be in any of us; freed us, in short, from the stocks of prose in which we had sat so long that we had grown well-nigh contented in our cramps. And who that saw the audience will ever forget it, where every one still capable of fire, or longing to renew in them the half-forgotten sense of it, was gathered? Those faces, young and old, agleam with pale intellectual light, eager with pleased attention, flash upon me once more from the deep recesses of the years with an exquisite pathos. Ah, beautiful young eyes, brimming with love and hope, wholly vanished now in that other world we call the Past, or peering doubtfully through the pensive gloaming of memory, your light impoverishes these cheaper days! I hear again that rustle of sensation, as they turned to exchange glances over some pithier thought, some keener flash of that humor which always played about the horizon of his mind like heat-lightning, and it seems now

like the sad whisper of the autumn leaves that are whirling around me. But would my picture be complete if I forgot that ample and vegeate countenance of Mr. R—— of W——, — how, from its regular post at the corner of the front bench, it turned in ruddy triumph to the profaner audience as if he were the inexplicably appointed fogleman of appreciation? I was reminded of him by those hearty cherubs in Titian's Assumption that look at you as who should say, "Did you ever see a Madonna like *that*? Did you ever behold one hundred and fifty pounds of womanhood mount heavenward before like a rocket?"

To some of us that long-past experience remains as the most marvelous and fruitful we have ever had. Emerson awakened us, saved us from the body of this death. It is the sound of the trumpet that the young soul longs for, careless what breath may fill it. Sidney heard it in the ballad of "Chevy Chase," and we in Emerson. Nor did it blow retreat, but called to us with assurance of victory. Did they say he was disconnected? So were the stars, that seemed larger to our eyes, still keen with that excitement, as we walked homeward with prouder stride over the creaking snow. And were *they* not knit together by a higher logic than our mere sense could master? Were we enthusiasts? I hope and believe we were, and am thankful to the man who made us worth something for once in our lives. If asked what was left? what we car-

ried home? we should not have been careful for an answer. It would have been enough if we had said that something beautiful had passed that way. Or we might have asked in return what one brought away from a symphony of Beethoven? Enough that he had set that ferment of wholesome discontent at work in us. There is one, at least, of those old hearers, so many of whom are now in the fruition of that intellectual beauty of which Emerson gave them both the desire and the foretaste, who will always love to repeat: —

“Che in la mente m'è fitta, ed or m'accuora
 La cara e buona immagine paterna
 Di voi, quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora
 M'insegnavaste come l'uom s'eterna.”¹

I am unconsciously thinking, as I write, of the third lecture of the present course, in which Mr. Emerson gave some delightful reminiscences of the intellectual influences in whose movement he had shared. It was like hearing Goethe read some passages of the “Wahrheit aus seinem Leben.” Not that there was not a little *Dichtung*,² too, here and there, as the lecturer built up so lofty a pedestal under certain figures as to lift them into a prominence of obscurity, and seem to masthead them there. Everybody was asking his neighbor

¹ Who formed in me my mind, and now endears to me his dear and good paternal image, as when he taught me hour by hour, how man may grow immortal.

² “Wahrheit und Dichtung,” Truth and Poetry, is the name given by Goethe to the story of his early life.

who this or that recondite great man was, in the faint hope that somebody might once have heard of him. There are those who call Mr. Emerson cold. Let them revise their judgment in presence of this loyalty of his that can keep warm for half a century, that never forgets a friendship, or fails to pay even a fancied obligation to the uttermost farthing. This substantiation of shadows was but incidental, and pleasantly characteristic of the man to those who know and love him. The greater part of the lecture was devoted to reminiscences of things substantial in themselves. He spoke of Everett, fresh from Greece and Germany; of Channing; of the translations of Margaret Fuller, Ripley, and Dwight; of the Dial and Brook Farm. To what he said of the latter an undertone of good-humored irony gave special zest. But what every one of his hearers felt was that the protagonist in the drama was left out. The lecturer was no Æneas to babble the *quorum magna pars fui*,¹ and, as one of his listeners, I cannot help wishing to say how each of them was commenting the story as it went along, and filling up the necessary gaps in it from his own private store of memories. His younger hearers could not know how much they owed to the benign impersonality, the quiet scorn of everything ignoble, the never-sated hunger of self-culture, that were personified in the man before them. But the older knew how much the

¹ Of which I was a great part.

country's intellectual emancipation was due to the stimulus of his teaching and example, how constantly he had kept burning the beacon of an ideal life above our lower region of turmoil. To him more than to all other causes together did the young martyrs of our civil war owe the sustaining strength of thoughtful heroism that is so touching in every record of their lives. Those who are grateful to Mr. Emerson, as many of us are, for what they feel to be most valuable in their culture, or perhaps I should say their impulse, are grateful not so much for any direct teachings of his as for that inspiring lift which only genius can give, and without which all doctrine is chaff.

This was something like the *caret* which some of us older boys wished to fill up on the margin of the master's lecture. Few men have been so much to so many, and through so large a range of aptitudes and temperaments, and this simply because all of us value manhood beyond any or all other qualities of character. We may suspect in him, here and there, a certain thinness and vagueness of quality, but let the waters go over him as they list, this masculine fiber of his will keep its lively color and its toughness of texture. I have heard some great speakers and some accomplished orators, but never any that so moved and persuaded men as he. There is a kind of undertow in that rich barytone of his that sweeps our minds from their foothold into deeper waters with a drift

we cannot and would not resist. And how artfully (for Emerson is a long-studied artist in these things) does the deliberate utterance, that seems waiting for the fit word, appear to admit us partners in the labor of thought and make us feel as if the glance of humor were a sudden suggestion, as if the perfect phrase lying written there on the desk were as unexpected to him as to us! In that closely-filed speech of his at the Burns centenary dinner every word seemed to have just dropped down to him from the clouds. He looked far away over the heads of his hearers, with a vague kind of expectation, as into some private heaven of invention, and the winged period came at last obedient to his spell. "My dainty Ariel!" he seemed murmuring to himself as he cast down his eyes as if in deprecation of the frenzy of approval and caught another sentence from the Sibylline leaves that lay before him ambushed behind a dish of fruit and seen only by nearest neighbors. Every sentence brought down the house, as I never saw one brought down before, —and it is not so easy to hit Scotsmen with a sentiment that has no hint of native brogue in it. I watched, for it was an interesting study, how the quick sympathy ran flashing from face to face down the long tables, like an electric spark thrilling as it went, and then exploded in a thunder of plaudits. I watched till tables and faces vanished, for I too found myself caught up in the common

enthusiasm, and my excited fancy set me under the *bema*¹ listening to him who fulminated over Greece. I can never help applying to him what Ben Jonson said of Bacon : "There happened in my time one noble speaker, who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough, or look aside from him, without loss. He commanded where he spoke." Those who heard him while their natures were yet plastic, and their mental nerves trembled under the slightest breath of divine air, will never cease to feel and say : —

" Was never eye did see that face,
Was never ear did hear that tongue,
Was never mind did mind his grace,
That ever thought the travail long ;
But eyes, and ears, and every thought,
Were with his sweet perfections caught."

¹ From which spoke Demosthenes.

A GREAT PUBLIC CHARACTER *¹

It is the misfortune of American biography that it must needs be more or less provincial, and that, contrary to what might have been predicted, this quality in it predominates in proportion as the country grows larger. Wanting any great and acknowledged center of national life and thought, our expansion has hitherto been rather aggregation than growth ; reputations must be hammered out thin to cover so wide a surface, and the substance of most hardly holds out to the boundaries of a single State. Our very history wants unity, and down to the Revolution the attention is wearied and confused by having to divide itself among thirteen parallel threads, instead of being concentrated on a single clew. A sense of remoteness and seclusion comes over us as we read, and we cannot help asking ourselves, "Were *not* these things done in a corner?" Notoriety may be achieved in a narrow sphere, but fame demands for its evidence a more distant and prolonged reverberation. To the world at large we were but a short column of figures in the corner of a blue-book, New England

* Copyright, 1871, by James Russell Lowell : 1899, by Mabel Burnett.

¹ This extract is the beginning of a review of "The Life of Josiah Quincy by his Son." The whole essay is not precisely of a character to come appropriately into our volume, so we stop, perhaps a little abruptly, after the more general introduction.

exporting so much salt-fish, timber, and Medford rum, Virginia so many hogsheads of tobacco, and buying with the proceeds a certain amount of English manufactures. The story of our early colonization had a certain moral interest, to be sure, but was altogether inferior in picturesque fascination to that of Mexico or Peru. The lives of our worthies, like that of our nation, are bare of those foregone and far-reaching associations with names, the divining-rods of fancy, which the soldiers and civilians of the Old World get for nothing by the mere accident of birth. Their historians and biographers have succeeded to the good will, as well as to the long-established stand, of the shop of glory. Time is, after all, the greatest of poets, and the sons of Memory stand a better chance of being the heirs of Fame. The philosophic poet¹ may find a proud solace in saying,

“Avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante
Trita solo;”²

but all the while he has the splendid centuries of Greece and Rome behind him, and can begin his poem with invoking a goddess from whom legend derived the planter of his race. His eyes looked out on a landscape saturated with glorious recollections; he had seen Cæsar, and heard Cicero. But who shall conjure with Saugus or Cato Four

¹ Lucretius.

² I seek the trackless regions of the Muses, pressed by no foot before.

Corners, — with Israel Putnam or Return Jonathan Meigs? We have been transplanted, and for us the long hierarchical succession of history is broken. The Past has not laid its venerable hands upon us in consecration, conveying to us that mysterious influence whose force is in its continuity. We are to Europe as the Church of England to her of Rome. The latter old lady may be the Scarlet Woman, or the Beast with ten horns, if you will, but hers are all the heirlooms, hers that vast spiritual estate of tradition, nowhere yet everywhere, whose revenues are none the less fruitful for being levied on the imagination. We may claim that England's history is also ours, but it is a *de jure*, and not a *de facto* property that we have in it, — something that may be proved indeed, yet is a merely intellectual satisfaction, and does not savor of the realty. Have we not seen the mockery crown and scepter of the exiled Stuarts in St. Peter's? the medal struck so lately as 1784, with its legend, HEN IX MAG BRIT ET HIB REX,¹ whose contractions but faintly typify the scantness of the fact?

As the novelist complains that our society wants that sharp contrast of character and costume which comes of caste, so in the narrative of our historians we miss what may be called background and perspective, as if the events and the actors in them

¹ Henry IX., King of Great Britain and Ireland. This was Henry Stuart, grandson of James II.

failed of that cumulative interest which only a long historical entail can give. Relatively, the crusade of Sir William Pepperell¹ was of more consequence than that of St. Louis, and yet forgive us, injured shade of the second American baronet, if we find the narrative of Joinville more interesting than your despatches to Governor Shirley. Relatively, the insurrection of that Daniel whose Irish patronymic Shea was euphonized into Shays,² as a set-off for the debasing of French *chaise* into *shay*, was more dangerous than that of Charles Edward; but for some reason or other (as vice sometimes has the advantage of virtue) the latter is more enticing to the imagination, and the least authentic relic of it in song or story has a relish denied to the painful industry of Minot. Our events seem to fall short of that colossal proportion which befits the monumental style. Look grave as we will, there is something ludicrous in Counsellor Keane's pig being the pivot of a revolution.³ We are of yesterday, and it is to no purpose that our political augurs divine from the flight of our eagles that to-morrow shall be ours, and flatter us with an all-hail hereafter. Things do really gain in greatness by being acted on a great and cosmopolitan stage, because there is inspiration in the thronged audience, and the

¹ The capture of Louisburg.

² Shays's war so called; a rebellion in 1786 in western Massachusetts.

³ In the early days of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

nearer match that puts men on their mettle. Webster was more largely endowed by nature than Fox, and Fisher Ames not much below Burke as a talker; but what a difference in the intellectual training, in the literary culture and associations, in the whole social outfit, of the men who were their antagonists and companions! It should seem that, if it be collision with other minds and with events that strikes or draws the fire from a man, then the quality of those might have something to do with the quality of the fire,—whether it shall be culinary or electric. We have never known the varied stimulus, the inexorable criticism, the many-sided opportunity of a great metropolis, the inspiring reënforcement of an undivided national consciousness. In everything but trade we have missed the invigoration of foreign rivalry. We may prove that we are this and that and the other,—our Fourth-of-July orators have proved it time and again,—the census has proved it; but the Muses are women, and have no great fancy for statistics, though easily silenced by them. We are great, we are rich, we are all kinds of good things; but did it never occur to you that somehow we are not interesting, except as a phenomenon? It may safely be affirmed that for one cultivated man in this country who studies American, there are fifty who study European history, ancient or modern.

Till within a year or two we have been as dis-

tant and obscure to the eyes of Europe as Ecuador to our own. Every day brings us nearer, enables us to see the Old World more clearly, and by inevitable comparison to judge ourselves with some closer approach to our real value. This has its advantage so long as our culture is, as for a long time it must be, European; for we shall be little better than apes and parrots till we are forced to measure our muscle with the trained and practiced champions of that elder civilization. We have at length established our claim to the noblesse of the sword, the first step still of every nation that would make its entry into the best society of history. To maintain ourselves there, we must achieve an equality in the more exclusive circle of culture, and to that end must submit ourselves to the European standard of intellectual weights and measures. That we have made the hitherto biggest gun might excite apprehension (were there a dearth of iron) but can never exact respect. That our pianos and patent reapers have won medals does naught but confirm us in our mechanic and material measure of merit. We must contribute something more than mere contrivances for the saving of labor, which we have been only too ready to misapply in the domain of thought and the higher kinds of invention. In those Olympic games where nations contend for truly immortal wreaths, it may well be questioned whether a mowing machine would stand much chance in the

chariot-races, — whether a piano, though made by a chevalier, could compete successfully for the prize of music.¹

We shall have to be content for a good while yet with our provincialism, and must strive to make the best of it. In it lies the germ of nationality, and that is, after all, the prime condition of all thoroughbred greatness of character. To this choicest fruit of a healthy life, well rooted in native soil, and drawing prosperous juices thence, nationality gives the keenest flavor. Mr. Lincoln was an original man, and in so far a great man; yet it was the Americanism of his every thought, word, and act which not only made his influence equally at home in East and West, but drew the eyes of the outside world, and was the pedestal that lifted him where he could be seen by them. Lincoln showed that native force may transcend local boundaries, but the growth of such nationality is hindered and hampered by our division into so many half-independent communities, each with its objects of county ambition, and its public men great to the borders of their district. In this way our standard of greatness is insensibly debased. To receive any national appointment, a man must have gone through precisely the worst training for it; he must have so far narrowed and belittled himself with State politics as to be acceptable at home. In this way a man may become chairman

¹ Quite as good reading in 1902 as in 1869.

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, because he knows how to pack a caucus in Catawampus County, or be sent ambassador to Barataria, because he has drunk bad whisky with every voter in Wildcat City. Should we ever attain to a conscious nationality, it will have the advantage of lessening the number of our great men, and widening our appreciation to the larger scale of the two or three that are left,—if there should be so many. Meanwhile we offer a premium to the production of great men in a small way, by inviting each State to set up the statues of two of its immortals in the Capitol. What a niggardly percentage! Already we are embarrassed, not to find the two, but to choose among the crowd of candidates. Well, seventy-odd heroes in about as many years is pretty well for a young nation. We do not envy most of them their eternal martyrdom in marble, their pillory of indiscrimination. We fancy even native tourists pausing before the greater part of the effigies, and, after reading the names, asking desperately, “Who was *he*?” Nay, if they should say, “Who the devil was *he*?” it were a pardonable invocation, for none so fit as the Prince of Darkness to act as *cicerone* among such palpable obscurities. We recall the courtyard of the Uffizi at Florence. That also is not free of parish celebrities; but Dante, Galileo, Michael Angelo, Macchiavelli, — shall the inventor of the sewing-machine, even with the button-holing

improvement, let us say, match with these, or with far lesser than these? Perhaps he was more practically useful than any one of these, or all of them together, but the soul is sensible of a sad difference somewhere. These also were citizens of a provincial capital; so were the greater part of Plutarch's heroes. Did they have a better chance than we moderns, — than we Americans? At any rate they have the start of us, and we must confess that

“By bed and table they lord it o'er us,
Our elder brothers, but one in blood.”

Yes, one in blood; that is the hardest part of it. Is our provincialism then in some great measure due to our absorption in the practical, as we politely call it, meaning the material, — to our habit of estimating greatness by the square mile and the hundred weight? Even during our war, in the midst of that almost unrivalled stress of soul, were not our speakers and newspapers so enslaved to the vulgar habit as to boast ten times of the thousands of square miles it covered with armed men, for once that they alluded to the motive that gave it all its meaning and its splendor? Perhaps it was as well that they did not exploit that passion of patriotism as an advertisement in the style of Barnum or Perham. “I scale one hundred and eighty pounds, but when I'm mad I weigh two ton,” said the Kentuckian, with a true notion of moral *avoirdupois*. That ideal kind of

weight is wonderfully increased by a national feeling, whereby one man is conscious that thirty millions of men go into the balance with him. The Roman in ancient, and the Englishman in modern times, have been most conscious of this representative solidity, and wherever one of them went there stood Rome or England in his shoes. We have made some advance in the right direction. Our civil war, by the breadth of its proportions and the implacability of its demands, forced us to admit a truer valuation, and gave us, in our own despite, great soldiers and sailors, allowed for such by all the world. The harder problems it has left behind may in time compel us to have great statesmen, with views capable of reaching beyond the next election. The criticism of Europe alone can rescue us from the provincialism of an over or false estimate of ourselves. Let us be thankful, and not angry, that we must accept it as our touchstone. Our stamp has so often been impressed upon base metal, that we cannot expect it to be taken on trust, but we may be sure that true gold will be equally persuasive the world over. Real manhood and honest achievement are nowhere provincial, but enter the select society of all time on an even footing.

Spanish America might be a good glass for us to look into. Those Catharine-wheel republics, always in revolution while the powder lasts, and sure to burn the fingers of whoever attempts inter-

vention, have also their great men, as placidly ignored by us as our own by jealous Europe. The following passage from the life of Don Simon Bolivar might allay many *motus animorum*, if rightly pondered. Bolivar, then a youth, was traveling in Italy, and his biographer tells us that "near Castiglione he was present at the grand review made by Napoleon of the columns defiling into the plain large enough to contain sixty thousand men. The throne was situated on an eminence that overlooked the plain, and Napoleon on several occasions looked through a glass at Bolivar and his companions, who were at the base of the hill. The hero Cæsar could not imagine that he beheld the liberator of the world of Columbus!" And small blame to him, one would say. We are not, then, it seems, the only foundling of Columbus, as we are so apt to take for granted. The great Genoese did not, as we supposed, draw that first star-guided furrow across the vague of waters with a single eye to the future greatness of the United States. And have we not sometimes, like the enthusiastic biographer, fancied the Old World staring through all its telescopes at us, and wondered that it did not recognize in us what we were fully persuaded we were *going* to be and do?

Our American life is dreadfully barren of those elements of the social picturesque which give piquancy to anecdote. And without anecdote,

what is biography, or even history, which is only biography on a larger scale? Clio,¹ though she take airs on herself, and pretend to be "philosophy teaching by example," is, after all, but a gossip who has borrowed Fame's speaking-trumpet, and should be figured with a teacup instead of a scroll in her hand. How much has she not owed of late to the tittle-tattle of her gillfirt sister Thalia?² In what gutters has not Macaulay raked for the brilliant bits with which he has put together his admirable mosaic picture of England under the last two Stuarts? Even Mommsen himself, who dislikes Plutarch's method as much as Montaigne loved it, cannot get or give a lively notion of ancient Rome, without running to the comic poets and the anecdote-mongers. He gives us the very beef-tea of history, nourishing and even palatable enough, excellently portable for a memory that must carry her own packs, and can afford little luggage; but for our own part, we prefer a full, old-fashioned meal, with its side-dishes of spicy gossip, and its last relish, the Stilton of scandal, so it be not too high. One volume of contemporary memoirs, stuffed though it be with lies (for lies to be good for anything must have a potential probability, must even be true so far as their moral and social setting is concerned), will throw more light into the dark backward of time than the gravest Camden or Thuanus.

¹ The Muse of History.

² The Muse of Gaiety and Comedy.

If St. Simon is not accurate, is he any the less essentially *true*? No history gives us so clear an understanding of the moral condition of average men after the restoration of the Stuarts as the unconscious blabbings of the Puritan tailor's son,¹ with his two consciences, as it were, — an inward, still sensitive in spots, though mostly toughened to India-rubber, and good rather for rubbing out old scores than retaining them, and an outward, alert, and termagantly effective in Mrs. Pepys. But we can have no St. Simons or Pepyses till we have a Paris or London to delocalize our gossip and give it historic breadth. All our capitals are fractional, merely greater or smaller gatherings of men, centers of business rather than of action or influence. Each contains so many souls, but is not, as the word "capital" implies, the true head of a community and seat of its common soul.

Has not life itself perhaps become a little more prosaic than it once was? As the clearing away of the woods scants the streams, may not our civilization have dried up some feeders that helped to swell the current of individual and personal force? We have sometimes thought that the stricter definition and consequent seclusion from each other of the different callings in modern times, as it narrowed the chance of developing and giving variety to character, lessened also the interest of biography. Formerly arts and

¹ Samuel Pepys, the writer of a famous Diary.

arms were not divided by so impassable a barrier as now. There was hardly such a thing as a *pékin*.¹ Cæsar gets up from writing his Latin Grammar to conquer Gaul, change the course of history, and make so many things possible,—among the rest our English language and Shakespeare. Horace had been a colonel; and from Æschylus, who fought at Marathon, to Ben Jonson, who trailed a pike in the Low Countries, the list of martial civilians is a long one. A man's education seems more complete who has smelt hostile powder from a less æsthetic distance than Goethe. It raises our confidence in Sir Kenelm Digby as a physicist, that he is able to illustrate some theory of acoustics in his "Treatise of Bodies" by instancing the effect of his guns in a sea-fight off Scanderoon. One would expect the proportions of character to be enlarged by such variety and contrast of experience. Perhaps it will by and by appear that our own Civil War has done something for us in this way. Colonel Higginson² comes down from his pulpit to draw on his jack-boots, and thenceforth rides in our imagination alongside of John Bunyan and Bishop Compton. To have stored moral capital enough to meet the drafts of Death at sight, must be an unmatched tonic. We saw our light-hearted youth come back with the modest

¹ A soldier's semi-contemptuous term for a civilian.

² Thomas Wentworth Higginson was colonel of one of the first colored regiments enlisted in the Civil War.

gravity of age, as if they had learned to throw out pickets against a surprise of any weak point in their temperament. Perhaps that American shiftiness, so often complained of, may not be so bad a thing, if, by bringing men acquainted with every humor of fortune and human nature, it puts them in fuller possession of themselves.

But with whatever drawbacks in special circumstances, the main interest of biography must always lie in the amount of character or essential manhood which the subject of it reveals to us, and events are of import only as means to that end. It is true that lofty and far-seen exigencies may give greater opportunity to some men, whose energy is more sharply spurred by the shout of a multitude than by the grudging *Well done!* of conscience. Some theorists have too hastily assumed that, as the power of public opinion increases, the force of private character, or what we call originality, is absorbed into and diluted by it. But we think Horace was right in putting tyrant and mob on a level as the trainers and tests of a man's solid quality. The amount of resistance of which one is capable to whatever lies outside the conscience, is of more consequence than all other faculties together; and democracy, perhaps, tries this by pressure in more directions, and with a more continuous strain, than any other form of society. In Josiah Quincy we have an example of character trained and shaped, under the nearest approach to

a pure democracy the world has ever seen, to a firmness, unity, and self-centered poise that recall the finer types of antiquity, in whom the public and private man were so wholly of a piece that they were truly everywhere at home, for the same sincerity of nature that dignified the hearth carried also a charm of homeliness into the forum. The phrase "a great public character," once common, seems to be going out of fashion, perhaps because there are fewer examples of the thing. It fits Josiah Quincy exactly. Active in civic and academic duties till beyond the ordinary period of man, at fourscore and ten his pen, voice, and venerable presence were still efficient in public affairs. A score of years after the energies of even vigorous men are declining or spent, his mind and character made themselves felt as in their prime. A true pillar of house and state, he stood unflinchingly upright under whatever burden might be laid upon him. The French Revolutionists aped what was itself but a parody of the elder republic, with their hair *à la* Brutus and their pedantic moralities *à la* Cato Minor, but this man unconsciously was the antique Roman they laboriously went about to be. Others have filled places more conspicuous, few have made the place they filled so conspicuous by an exact and disinterested performance of duty.

In the biography of Mr. Quincy by his son there is something of the provincialism of which we have

spoken as inherent in most American works of the kind. His was a Boston life in the strictest sense. But provincialism is relative, and where it has a flavor of its own, as in Scotland, it is often agreeable in proportion to its very intensity. The Massachusetts in which Mr. Quincy's habits of thought were acquired was a very different Massachusetts from that in which we of later generations have been bred. Till after he had passed middle life, Boston was more truly a capital than any other city in America, before or since, except possibly Charleston. The acknowledged head of New England, with a population of well-nigh purely English descent, mostly derived from the earlier emigration, with ancestral traditions and inspiring memories of its own, it had made its name familiar in both worlds, and was both historically and politically more important than at any later period. The Revolution had not interrupted, but rather given a freer current to the tendencies of its past. Both by its history and position, the town had what the French call a solidarity, an almost personal consciousness, rare anywhere, rare especially in America, and more than ever since our enormous importation of fellow-citizens to whom America means merely shop, or meat three times a day. Boston has been called the "American Athens." Æsthetically, the comparison is ludicrous, but politically it was more reasonable. Its population was homogeneous, and there were leading families ;

while the form of government by town-meeting, and the facility of social and civic intercourse, gave great influence to popular personal qualities and opportunity to new men. A wide commerce, while it had insensibly softened the asperities of Puritanism and imported enough foreign refinement to humanize, not enough foreign luxury to corrupt, had not essentially qualified the native tone of the town. Retired sea-captains (true brothers of Chaucer's Shipman) whose exploits had kindled the imagination of Burke, added a not unpleasant savor of salt to society. They belonged to the old school of Gilbert, Hawkins, Frobisher, and Drake, parcel-soldiers all of them, who had commanded armed ships and had tales to tell of gallant fights with privateers or pirates, truest representatives of those Vikings who, if trade in lumber or peltry was dull, would make themselves Dukes of Dublin or Earls of Orkney. If trade pinches the mind, commerce liberalizes it; and Boston was also advantaged with the neighborhood of the country's oldest College, which maintained the wholesome traditions of culture, — where Homer and Horace are familiar there is a certain amount of cosmopolitanism, — and would not allow bigotry to become despotism. Manners were more self-respectful, and therefore more respectful of others, and personal sensitiveness was fenced with more of that ceremonial with which society armed itself when it surrendered the

runder protection of the sword. We had not then seen a Governor in his chamber at the State-house with his hat on, a cigar in his mouth, and his feet upon the stove. Domestic service, in spite of the proverb, was not seldom an inheritance, nor was household peace dependent on the whim of a foreign armed neutrality in the kitchen. Servant and master were of one stock; there was decent authority and becoming respect; the tradition of the Old World lingered after its superstition had passed away. There was an aristocracy such as is healthful in a well-ordered community, founded on public service, and hereditary so long as the virtue which was its patent was not escheated. The clergy, no longer hedged by the reverence exacted by sacerdotal caste, were more than repaid by the consideration willingly paid to superior culture. What changes, many of them for the better, some of them surely for the worse, and all of them inevitable, did not Josiah Quincy see in that well-nigh secular life which linked the war of independence to the war of nationality! We seemed to see a type of them the other day in a colored man standing with an air of comfortable self-possession while his boots were brushed by a youth of catholic neutral tint, but whom nature had planned for white. The same eyes that had looked on Gage's redcoats, saw Colonel Shaw's negro regiment march out of Boston in the national blue. Seldom has a life, itself actively associated

with public affairs, spanned so wide a chasm for the imagination. Oglethorpe's offers a parallel, — the aid-de-camp of Prince Eugene calling on John Adams, American Ambassador to England. Most long lives resemble those threads of gossamer, the nearest approach to nothing unmeaningly prolonged, 'scarce visible pathway of some worm from his cradle to his grave; but Quincy's was strung with seventy active years, each one a rounded bead of usefulness and service.

Mr. Quincy was a Bostonian of the purest type. Since the settlement of the town, there had been a colonel of the Boston regiment in every generation of his family. He lived to see a grandson brevetted with the same title for gallantry in the field. Only child of one among the most eminent advocates of the Revolution, and who but for his untimely death would have been a leading actor in it, his earliest recollections belonged to the heroic period in the history of his native town. With that history his life was thenceforth intimately united by offices of public trust, as Representative in Congress, State Senator, Mayor, and President of the University, to a period beyond the ordinary span of mortals. Even after he had passed ninety, he would not claim to be *emeritus*, but came forward to brace his townsmen with a courage and warm them with a fire younger than their own. The legend of Colonel Goffe at Deerfield became a reality to the eyes of this generation. The New

England breed is running out, we are told ! This was in all ways a beautiful and fortunate life, — fortunate in the goods of this world, — fortunate, above all, in the force of character which makes fortune secondary and subservient. We are fond in this country of what are called self-made men (as if real success could ever be other); and this is all very well, provided they make something worth having of themselves. Otherwise it is not so well, and the examples of such are at best but stuff for the Alnaschar dreams of a false democracy. The gist of the matter is, not where a man starts from, but where he comes out. We are glad to have the biography of one who, beginning as a gentleman, kept himself such to the end, — who, with no necessity of labor, left behind him an amount of thoroughly done work such as few have accomplished with the mighty help of hunger. Some kind of pace may be got out of the veriest jade by the near prospect of oats; but the thoroughbred has the spur in his blood.

In the remainder of his essay, Lowell gives us something of a sketch of the life of Josiah Quincy, following along the diary of which he excellently says: "Thus many a door into the past, long irrevocably shut on us, is set ajar, and we of the younger generation on the landing catch peeps of distinguished men, and bits of their table talk." We of a generation younger still will like the glimpses of Washington, of Hancock, of Adams, and we could hardly have any one better than Lowell to give us an account of what he thought most entertaining. The style of the diary itself is vigorous and not unattractive. "It needs the magic of no Dr. Heidegger," writes Lowell, thinking of one of Hawthorne's stories, "to make these dried roses that drop from between a

volume shut for seventy years bloom again in all their sweetness." That is a pretty figure, very much in Lowell's best vein, and there are two or three more in the essay which follows through the career of Josiah Quincy, through various distinguished positions, "a figure that we can contemplate with more than satisfaction, — a figure of admirable example in a democracy as that of a model citizen."

FROM "ESSAYS: FIRST SERIES"



HISTORY

"There is no great and no small
To the Soul that maketh all :
And where it cometh, all things are ;
And it cometh everywhere."

THERE is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think ; what a saint has felt, he may feel ; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand. Who hath access to this universal mind, is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent.

Of the works of this mind history is the record. Its genius is illustrated by the entire series of days. Man is explicable by nothing less than all his history. Without hurry, without rest, the human spirit goes forth from the beginning to embody every faculty, every thought, every emo-

tion, which belongs to it in appropriate events. But always the thought is prior to the fact ; all the facts of history preëxist in the mind as laws. Each law in turn is made by circumstances predominant, and the limits of nature give power to but one at a time. A man is the whole encyclopedia of facts. The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn, and Egypt, Greece, Rome, Gaul, Britain, America, lie folded already in the first man. Epoch after epoch, camp, kingdom, empire, republic, democracy, are merely the application of his manifold spirit to the manifold world.

This human mind wrote history and this must read it. The Sphinx must solve her own riddle. If the whole of history is in one man, it is all to be explained from individual experience. There is a relation between the hours of our life and the centuries of time. As the air I breathe is drawn from the great repositories of nature, as the light on my book is yielded by a star a hundred millions of miles distant, as the poise of my body depends on the equilibrium of centrifugal and centripetal forces, so the hours should be instructed by the ages, and the ages explained by the hours. Of the universal mind each individual man is one more incarnation. All its properties consist in him. Every step in his private experience flashes a light on what great bodies of men have done, and the crises of his life refer to national crises. Every revolution was first a thought in one man's

mind, and when the same thought occurs to another man, it is the key to that era. Every reform was once a private opinion, and when it shall be private opinion again, it will solve the problem of the age. The fact narrated must correspond to something in me to be credible or intelligible. We as we read must become Greeks, Romans, Turks, priest, and king, martyr and executioner, must fasten these images to some reality in our secret experience, or we shall see nothing, learn nothing, keep nothing. What befell Asdrubal or Cæsar Borgia, is as much an illustration of the mind's powers and depravations as what has befallen us. Each new law and political movement has meaning for you. Stand before each of its tablets and say, "Here is one of my coverings. Under this fantastic, or odious, or graceful mask, did my Proteus nature hide itself." This remedies the defect of our too great nearness to ourselves. This throws our own actions into perspective : and as crabs, goats, scorpions, the balance and the waterpot, lose all their meanness¹ when hung as signs in the zodiac, so I can see my own vices without heat in the distant persons of Solomon, Alcibiades, and Catiline.

It is this universal nature which gives worth to particular men and things. Human life as containing this is mysterious and inviolable, and we hedge it round with penalties and laws. All laws

¹ Commonplace, ordinary character.

derive hence their ultimate reason, all express at last reverence for some command of their supreme illimitable essence. Property also holds of the soul, covers great spiritual facts, and instinctively we at first hold to it with swords and laws, and wide and complex combinations. The obscure consciousness of this fact is the light of all our day, the claim of claims; the plea for education, for justice, for charity, the foundation of friendship and love, and of the heroism and grandeur which belongs to acts of self-reliance. It is remarkable that involuntarily we always read as superior beings. Universal history, the poets, the romancers, do not in their stateliest pictures,—in the sacerdotal, the imperial palaces, in the triumphs of will, or of genius, anywhere lose our ear, anywhere make us feel that we intrude, that this is for our betters, but rather is it true that in their grandest strokes, there we feel most at home. All that Shakespeare says of the king, yonder slip of a boy that reads in the corner, feels to be true of himself. We sympathize in the great moments of history, in the great discoveries, the great resistances, the great prosperities of men; because there law was enacted, the sea was searched, the land was found, or the blow was struck *for us*, as we ourselves in that place would have done or applauded.

So is it in respect to condition and character. We honor the rich because they have externally

the freedom, power, and grace which we feel to be proper to man, proper to us. So all that is said of the wise man by stoic¹ or oriental or modern essayist, describes to each man his own idea, describes his unattained but attainable self. All literature writes the character of the wise man. All books, monuments, pictures, conversation, are portraits in which the wise man finds the lineaments he is forming. The silent and the loud praise him, and accost him, and he is stimulated wherever he moves as by personal allusions. A wise and good soul, therefore, never needs look for allusions personal and laudatory in discourse. He hears the commendation, not of himself, but more sweet, of that character he seeks, in every word that is said concerning character, yea, further, in every fact that befalls,—in the running river, and the rustling corn. Praise is looked, homage tendered, love flows from mute nature, from the mountains and the lights of the firmament.

These hints, dropped as it were from sleep and night, let us use in broad day. The student is to read history actively and not passively; to esteem his own life the text, and books the commentary. Thus compelled, the muse of history will utter oracles, as never to those who do not respect themselves. I have no expectation that any man will read history aright, who thinks that what

¹ Classic philosophy, speaking generally.

was done in a remote age, by men whose names have resounded far, has any deeper sense than what he is doing to-day.

The world exists for the education of each man. There is no age or state of society or mode of action in history, to which there is not somewhat corresponding in his life. Everything tends in a most wonderful manner to abbreviate itself and yield its whole virtue to him. He should see that he can live all history in his own person. He must sit at home with might and main, and not suffer himself to be bullied by kings and empires, but know that he is greater than all the geography and all the government of the world; he must transfer the point of view from which history is commonly read, from Rome and Athens and London to himself, and not deny his conviction that he is the Court,¹ and if England or Egypt have anything to say to him, he will try the case; if not, let them forever be silent. He must attain and maintain that lofty sight where facts yield their secret sense, and poetry and annals are alike. The instinct of the mind, the purpose of nature, betrays itself in the use we make of the signal narrations of history. Time dissipates to shining ether the solid angularity of facts. No anchor, no cable, no fences avail to keep a fact a fact. Babylon and Troy and Tyre and even early Rome are passing already into fiction. The garden of Eden,

¹ For himself, the only judge.

the Sun standing still in Gibeon, is poetry thenceforward to all nations. Who cares what the fact was, when we have thus made a constellation of it to hang in heaven an immortal sign? London and Paris and New York must go the same way. "What is History," said Napoleon, "but a fable agreed upon?" This life of ours is stuck round¹ with Egypt, Greece, Gaul, England, War, Colonization, Church, Court, and Commerce, as with so many flowers and wild ornaments, grave and gay. I will not make more account of them. I believe in Eternity. I can find Greece, Palestine, Italy, Spain, and the Islands,—the genius and creative principle of each and of all areas in my own mind.

We are always coming up with the facts that have moved us in history in our private experience, and verifying them here. All history becomes subjective; in other words, there is properly no History; only Biography. Every soul must know the whole lesson for itself—must go over the whole ground. What it does not see, what it does not live, it will not know. What the former age has epitomized into a formula or rule for manipular convenience, it will lose all the good of verifying for itself, by means of the wall of that rule. Somewhere or other, some time or other, it will demand and find compensation for that loss by doing the work itself. Ferguson dis-

¹ So that we can hardly see the real thing for the ornaments.

covered many things in astronomy which had long been known. The better for him.

History must be this or it is nothing. Every law which the state enacts, indicates a fact in human nature; that is all. We must in our own natures see the necessary reason for every fact — see how it could and must be. So stand before every public, every private work; before an oration of Burke, before a victory of Napoleon, before a martyrdom of Sir Thomas More, of Sidney, of Marmaduke Robinson, before a French Reign of Terror, and a Salem hanging of witches, before a fanatic Revival, and the Animal Magnetism¹ in Paris, or in Providence. We assume that we under like influence should be alike affected, and should achieve the like; and we aim to master intellectually the steps, and reach the same height or the same degradation that our fellow, our proxy has done.

All inquiry into antiquity, — all curiosity respecting the pyramids, the excavated cities, — Stonehenge, the Ohio Circles,² Mexico, Memphis, is the desire to do away this wild, savage, and preposterous There and Then, and introduce in its place the Here and the Now. It is to banish the *Not me*, and supply the *Me*. It is to abolish difference and restore unity. Belzoni digs and meas-

¹ The name given by Mesmer to a series of phenomena, even now only partly understood, of which the hypnotic element is the best known.

² The Mounds.

ures in the mummy-pits and pyramids of Thebes, until he can see the end of the difference between the monstrous work and himself. When he has satisfied himself, in general and in detail, that it was made by such a person as himself, so armed and so motivated, and to ends to which he himself in given circumstances should also have worked, the problem is then solved; his thought lives along the whole line of temples and sphinxes and catacombs, passes through them all like a creative soul, with satisfaction, and they live again to the mind, or are *now*.

A Gothic cathedral affirms that it was done by us, and not done by us. Surely it was by man, but we find it not in our man. But we apply ourselves to the history of its production. We put ourselves into the place and historical state of the builder. We remember the forest dwellers, the first temples, the adherence to the first type, and the decoration of it as the wealth of the nation increased; the value which is given to wood by carving led to the carving over the whole mountain of stone of a cathedral. When we have gone through this process, and added thereto the Catholic Church, its cross, its music, its processions, its Saints' days, and image-worship, we have, as it were, been the man that made the minster; we have seen how it could and must be. We have the sufficient reason.

The difference between men is in their princi-

ple of association. Some men classify objects by color and size and other accidents of appearance ; others by intrinsic likeness, or by the relation of cause and effect. The progress of the intellect consists in the clearer vision of causes which overlooks surface differences. To the poet, to the philosopher, to the saint, all things are friendly and sacred, all events profitable, all days holy, all men divine. For the eye is fastened on the life, and slights the circumstance. Every chemical substance, every plant, every animal in its growth, teaches the unity of cause, the variety of appearance.

Why, being as we are surrounded by this all-creating nature, soft and fluid as a cloud or the air, should we be such hard pedants, and magnify a few forms? Why should we make account of time, or of magnitude, or of form? The soul knows them not, and genius, obeying its law, knows how to play with them as a young child plays with graybeards and in churches. Genius studies the casual thought, and far back in the womb of things, sees the rays parting from one orb, that diverge ere they fall by infinite diameters. Genius watches the monad through all his masks as he performs the metempsychosis of nature. Genius detects through the fly, through the caterpillar, through the grub, through the egg, the constant type of the individual ; through countless individuals the fixed species ; through

many species the genus; through all genera the steadfast type; through all the kingdoms of organized life the eternal unity. Nature is a mutable cloud, which is always, and never the same. She casts the same thought into troops of forms, as a poet makes twenty fables with one moral. Beautifully shines a spirit through the brutality and toughness of matter. Alone omnipotent, it converts all things to its own end. The adamant streams into softest but precise form before it, but, whilst I look at it, its outline and texture are changed altogether. Nothing is so fleeting as form. Yet never does it quite deny itself. In man we still trace the rudiments or hints of all that we esteem badges of servitude in the lower races, yet in him they enhance his nobleness and grace; as Io, in Æschylus, transformed to a cow, offends the imagination, but how changed when an Isis in Egypt she meets Jove, a beautiful woman, with nothing of the metamorphosis left but the lunar horns as the splendid ornament of her brows.

The identity of history is equally intrinsic, the diversity equally obvious. There is at the surface infinite variety of things; at the center there is simplicity and unity of cause. How many are the acts of one man in which we recognize the same character. See the variety of the sources of our information in respect to the Greek genius. Thus at first we have the *civil history* of that people, as

Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch have given it — a very sufficient account of what manner of persons they were, and what they did. Then we have the same soul expressed for us again in their *literature*; in poems, drama, and philosophy: a very complete form. Then we have it once more in their *architecture* — the purest sensuous beauty — the perfect medium never overstepping the limit of charming propriety and grace. Then we have it once more in *sculpture* — “the tongue on the balance of expression,” those forms in every action, at every age of life ranging through all the scale of condition, from god to beast, and never transgressing the ideal of serenity, but in convulsive exertion¹ the liege of order and of law. Thus, of the genius of one remarkable people, we have a four-fold representation — the most various expression of one moral thing: and to the senses what more unlike than an ode of Pindar, a marble Centaur, the peristyle of the Parthenon, and the last actions of Phocian? Yet do these varied external expressions proceed from one national mind.

Every one must have observed faces and forms which, without any resembling feature, make a like impression on the beholder. A particular picture or copy of verses, if it do not awaken the same train of images, will yet superinduce the same sentiment as some wild mountain walk, although

¹ As for instance in the statue of the Discus-thrower. Emerson more probably has in mind the Laocoön.

the resemblance is nowise obvious to the senses, but is occult and out of the reach of the understanding. Nature is an endless combination and repetition of a very few laws. She hums the old well-known air through innumerable variations.

Nature is full of a sublime family likeness throughout her works. She delights in startling us with resemblances in the most unexpected quarters. I have seen the head of an old sachem of the forest, which at once reminded the eye of a bald mountain summit, and the furrows of the brow suggested the strata of the rock. There are men whose manners have the same essential splendor as the simple and awful sculpture on the friezes of the Parthenon, and the remains of the earliest Greek art. And there are compositions of the same strain to be found in the books of all ages. What is Guido's *Rospigliosi Aurora* but a morning thought, as the horses in it are only a morning cloud. If any one will but take pains to observe the variety of actions to which he is equally inclined in certain moods of mind, and those to which he is averse, he will see how deep is the chain of affinity.

A painter told me that nobody could draw a tree without in some sort becoming a tree; or draw a child by studying the outlines of its form merely, — but, by watching for a time his motions and plays, the painter enters into his nature, and can then draw him at will in every attitude. So

Roos "entered into the utmost nature of a sheep." I knew a draughtsman employed in a public survey, who found that he could not sketch the rocks until their geological structure was first explained to him.

What is to be inferred from these facts but this, that in a certain state of thought is the common origin of very diverse works? It is the spirit and not the fact that is identical. By descending far down into the depths of the soul, and not primarily by a painful acquisition of many manual skills, the artist attains the power of awakening other souls to a given activity.

It has been said that "common souls pay with what they do; nobler souls with that which they are." And why? Because a soul, living from a great depth of being, awakens in us by its actions and words, by its very looks and manners, the same power and beauty that a gallery of sculpture, or of pictures, are wont to animate.

Civil history, natural history, the history of art, and the history of literature—all must be explained from individual history, or must remain words. There is nothing but is related to us, nothing that does not interest us—kingdom, college, tree, horse, or iron shoe, the roots of all things are in man. It is in the soul that architecture exists. Santa Croce¹ and the Dome of St. Peter's are lame copies after a divine model.

¹ A famous church in Florence.

Strasburg Cathedral is a material counterpart of the soul of Erwin of Steinbach. The true poem is the poet's mind; the true ship is the ship-builder. In the man, could we lay him open, we should see the sufficient reason for the last flourish and tendril of his work, as every spine and tint in the sea-shell preëxist in the secreting organs of the fish. The whole of heraldry and of chivalry is in courtesy. A man of fine manners shall pronounce your name with all the ornament that titles of nobility could ever add.

The trivial experience of every day is always verifying some old prediction to us, and converting into things for us also the words and signs which we had heard and seen without heed. Let me add a few examples, such as fall within the scope of every man's observation, of trivial facts which go to illustrate great and conspicuous facts.

A lady, with whom I was riding in the forest, said to me, that the woods always seemed to her *to wait*, as if the genii who inhabit them suspended their deeds until the wayfarer had passed onward. This is precisely the thought which poetry has celebrated in the dance of the fairies which breaks off on the approach of human feet. The man who has seen the rising moon break out of the clouds at midnight, has been present, like an archangel at the creation of light and of the world. I remember that being abroad one summer day, my companion pointed out to me a broad cloud, which

might extend a quarter of a mile parallel to the horizon, quite accurately in the form of a cherub as painted over churches, — a round block in the center which it was easy to animate with eyes and mouth, supported on either side by wide stretched symmetrical wings. What appears once in the atmosphere may appear often, and it was undoubtedly the archetype of that familiar ornament. I have seen in the sky a chain of summer lightning which at once revealed to me that the Greeks drew from nature when they painted the thunderbolt in the hand of Jove. I have seen a snow-drift along the sides of the stone wall which obviously gave the idea of the common architectural scroll to abut a tower.

By simply throwing ourselves into new circumstances we do continually invent anew the orders and the ornaments of architecture, as we see how each people merely decorated its primitive abodes. The Doric temple still presents the semblance of the wooden cabin in which the Dorian dwelt. The Chinese pagoda is plainly a Tartar tent. The Indian and Egyptian temples still betray the mounds and subterranean houses of their forefathers. "The custom of making houses and tombs in the living rock" (says Heeren, in his "Researches on the Ethiopians") "determined very naturally the principal character of the Nubian Egyptian architecture to the colossal form which it assumed. In these caverns already prepared by

nature, the eye was accustomed to dwell on huge shapes and masses, so that when art came to the assistance of nature, it could not move on a small scale without degrading itself. What would statues of the usual size or neat porches and wings have been, associated with those gigantic halls before which only Colossi could sit as watchmen, or lean on the pillars of the interior?"

The Gothic church plainly originated in a rude adaptation of the forest trees with all their boughs to a festal or solemn arcade, as the bands about the cleft pillars still indicate the green withes that tied them. No one can walk in a road cut through pine woods, without being struck with the architectural appearance of the grove, especially in winter, when the bareness of all other trees shows the low arch of the Saxons. In the woods in a winter afternoon one will see as readily the origin of the stained glass window with which the Gothic cathedrals are adorned, in the colors of the western sky seen through the bare and crossing branches of the forest. Nor can any lover of nature enter the old piles of Oxford and the English cathedrals without feeling that the forest overpowered the mind of the builder, and that his chisel, his saw, and plane still reproduced its ferns, its spikes of flowers, its locust, its pine, its oak, its fir, its spruce.

The Gothic cathedral is a blossoming in stone subdued by the insatiable demand of harmony in

man. The mountain of granite blooms into an eternal flower with the lightness and delicate finish as well as the aërial proportions and perspective of vegetable beauty.

In like manner all public facts are to be individualized, all private facts are to be generalized. Then at once History becomes fluid and true, and Biography deep and sublime. As the Persian imitated in the slender shafts and capitals of his architecture the stem and flower of the lotus and palm, so the Persian Court in its magnificent era never gave over the Nomadism of its barbarous tribes, but traveled from Ecbatana, where the spring was spent, to Susa in summer, and to Babylon for the winter.

In the early history of Asia and Africa, Nomadism and Agriculture are the two antagonistic facts. The geography of Asia and Africa necessitated a nomadic life. But the nomads were the terror of all those whom the soil or the advantages of a market had induced to build towns. Agriculture, therefore, was a religious injunction because of the perils of the state from nomadism. And in these late and civil countries of England and Africa, the contest of these propensities still fights out the old battle in each individual. We are all rovers and all fixtures by turns, and pretty rapid turns. The nomads of Africa are constrained to wander by the attacks of the gad-fly, which drives the cattle mad, and so compels the tribe to emigrate in the

rainy season and drive off the cattle to the higher sandy regions. The nomads of Asia follow the pasturage from month to month. In America and Europe the nomadism is of trade and curiosity. A progress certainly from the gad-fly of Astaboras to the Anglo and Italomania of Boston Bay.¹ The difference between men in this respect is the faculty of rapid domestication, the power to find his chair and bed everywhere, which one man has, and another has not. Some men have so much of the Indian left, have constitutionally such habits of accommodation, that at sea, or in the forest, or in the snow, they sleep as warm, and dine with as good appetite, and associate as happily, as in their own house. And to push this old fact still one degree nearer, we may find it a representative of a permanent fact in human nature, — the intellectual nomadism in the faculty of objectiveness or of eyes which everywhere feed themselves. Who hath such eyes, everywhere falls into easy relations with his fellow-men. Every man, everything is a prize, a study, a property to him, and this love smooths his brow, joins him to men and makes him beautiful and beloved in their sight. His house is a wagon; he roams through all latitudes as easily as a Calmuc.

Everything the individual sees without him corresponds to his states of mind, and every-

¹ The American passion for rushing away to England and Italy.

thing is in turn intelligible to him as his onward thinking leads him into the truth to which that act or series belongs.

The primeval world, the Fore-world, as the Germans say, — I can dive to it in myself as well as grope for it with researching fingers in catacombs, libraries, and the broken reliefs and torsos of ruined villas.

What is the foundation of that interest all men feel in Greek history, letters, art, and poetry, in all its periods, from the heroic or Homeric age, down to the domestic life of the Athenians and Spartans, four or five centuries later? This period draws us because we are Greeks. It is a state through which every man in some sort passes. The Grecian state is the era of the bodily nature, the perfection of the senses, — of the spiritual nature unfolded in strict unity with the body. In it existed those human forms which supplied the sculptor with his models of Hercules, Phœbus, and Jove; not like the forms abounding in the streets of modern cities, wherein the face is a confused blur of features, but composed of incorrupt, sharply defined and symmetrical features, whose eye-sockets are so formed that it would be impossible for such eyes to squint, and take furtive glances on this side and on that, but they must turn the whole head.

The manners of that period are plain and fierce. The reverence exhibited is for personal qualities,

courage, address, self-command, justice, strength, swiftness, a loud voice, a broad chest. Luxury is not known, nor elegance. A sparse population and want make every man his own valet, cook, butcher, and soldier, and the habit of supplying his own needs educates the body to wonderful performances. Such are, the Agamemnon and Diomed of Homer, and not far different is the picture Xenophon gives of himself and his compatriots in the Retreat of the Ten Thousand.¹

"After the army had crossed the river Teleboas in Armenia, there fell much snow, and the troops lay miserably on the ground, covered with it. But Xenophon arose naked, and taking an axe, began to split wood; whereupon others rose and did the like." Throughout his army seemed to be a boundless liberty of speech. They quarrel for plunder, they wrangle with the generals on each new order, and Xenophon is as sharp-tongued as any, and sharper-tongued than most, and so gives as good as he gets. Who does not see that this is a gang of great boys with such a code of honor and such lax discipline as great boys have?

The costly charm of the ancient tragedy and indeed of all the old literature is, that the persons speak simply, — speak as persons who have great good sense without knowing it, before yet the reflective habit has become the predominant habit of the mind. Our admiration of the antique is

¹ The retreat of the Greek mercenaries after the battle of Cunaxa.

not admiration of the old, but of the natural. The Greeks are not reflective but perfect in their senses, perfect in their health, with the finest physical organization in the world. Adults acted with the simplicity and grace of boys. They made vases, tragedies, and statues such as healthy senses should,—that is, in good taste. Such things have continued to be made in all ages, and are now, wherever a healthy physique exists, but, as a class, from their superior organization, they have surpassed all. They combine the energy of manhood with the engaging unconsciousness of childhood. Our reverence for them is our reverence for childhood. Nobody can reflect upon an unconscious act with regret or contempt. Bard or hero cannot look down on the word or gesture of a child. It is as great as they. The attraction of these manners is, that they belong to man, and are known to every man in virtue of his being once a child; beside that always there are individuals who retain these characteristics. A person of childlike genius and inborn energy is still a Greek, and revives our love of the muse of Hellas. A great boy, a great girl, with good sense, is a Greek. Beautiful is the love of nature in the "*Philoctetes*."¹ But in reading those fine apostrophes to sleep, to the stars, rocks, mountains, and waves, I feel time passing away as an ebbing sea. I feel the eternity of man, the iden-

¹ One of the tragedies of Sophocles.

tity of his thought. The Greek had, it seems, the same fellow-beings as I. The sun and moon, water and fire, met his heart precisely as they meet mine. Then the vaunted distinction between Greek and English, between classic and romantic schools seems superficial and pedantic. When a thought of Plato becomes a thought to me,—when a truth that fired the soul of Pindar fires mine, time is no more. When I feel that we two meet in a perception, that our two souls are tinged with the same hue, and do, as it were, run into one, why should I measure degrees of latitude, why should I count Egyptian years?

The student interprets the age of chivalry by his own age of chivalry, and the days of maritime adventure and circumnavigation by quite parallel miniature experiences of his own. To the sacred history of the world, he has the same key. When the voice of a prophet out of the deeps of antiquity merely echoes to him a sentiment of his infancy, a prayer of his youth, he then pierces to the truth through all the confusion of tradition and caricature of institutions.

Rare, extravagant spirits come by us at intervals, who disclose to us new facts in nature. I see that men of God have always, from time to time, walked among men and made their commission felt in the heart and soul of the commonest hearer. Hence, evidently, the tripod, the priest, the priestess inspired by the divine afflatus.

Jesus astonishes and overpowers sensual people. They cannot unite him to history or reconcile him with themselves. As they come to revere their intuitions and aspire to live holily, their own piety explains every fact, every word.

How easily these old worships of Moses, of Zoroaster, of Menu, of Socrates, domesticate themselves in the mind. I cannot find any antiquity in them. They are mine as much as theirs.

Then I have seen the first monks and anchorets without crossing seas or centuries. More than once some individual has appeared to me with such negligence of labor and such commanding contemplation, a haughty beneficiary, begging in the name of God, as made good to the nineteenth century Simeon the Stylite, the Thebais,¹ and the first Capuchins.

The priestcraft of the East and West, of the Magian, Brahmin, Druid, and Inca, is expounded in the individual's private life. The cramping influence of a hard formalist on a young child in repressing his spirits and courage, paralyzing the understanding, and that without producing indignation, but only fear and obedience, and even much sympathy with the tyranny,—is a familiar fact explained to the child when he becomes a man, only by seeing that the oppressor of his youth is himself a child tyrannized over by those names and words and forms, of whose influence he was

¹ The abode of Egyptian hermits and anchorites.

merely the organ to the youth. The fact teaches him how Belus was worshiped, and how the pyramids were built, better than the discovery by Champollion of the names of all the workmen and the cost of every tile. He finds Assyria and the mounds of Cholula at his door, and himself has laid the courses.

Again in that protest which each considerate person makes against the superstition of his time, he reacts step for step the part of old reformers, and in the search after truth finds like them new perils to virtue. He learns again what moral vigor is needed to supply the girdle of a superstition. A great licentiousness treads on the heels of a reformation. How many times in the history of the world has the Luther of the day had to lament the decay of piety in his own household. "Doctor," said his wife to Martin Luther one day, "how is it that whilst subject to papacy, we prayed so often and with such fervor, whilst now we pray with the utmost coldness and very seldom?"

The advancing man discovers how deep a property he hath in all literature, — in all fable as well as in all history. He finds that the poet was no odd fellow who described strange and impossible situations, but that universal man wrote by his pen a confession true for one and true for all. His own secret biography he finds in lines wonderfully intelligible to him, yet dotted down before he was born. One after another he comes up in

his private adventures with every fable of Æsop, of Homer, of Hafiz, of Ariosto, of Chaucer, of Scott, and verifies them with his own head and hands.

The beautiful fables of the Greeks, being proper creations of the Imagination and not of the Fancy, are universal verities. What a range of meanings and what perpetual pertinence has the story of Prometheus! Beside its primary value as the first chapter of the history of Europe (the mythology thinly veiling authentic facts, the invention of the mechanic arts, and the migration of colonies), it gives the history of religion with some closeness to the faith of later ages. Prometheus is the Jesus of the old mythology. He is the friend of man; stands between the unjust "justice" of the Eternal Father, and the race of mortals; and readily suffers all things on their account. But where it departs from the Calvinistic Christianity, and exhibits him as the defier of Jove, it represents a state of mind which readily appears wherever the doctrine of Theism is taught in a crude, objective form, and which seems the self-defense of man against this untruth, namely, a discontent with the believed fact that a God exists, and a feeling that the obligation of reverence is onerous. It would steal, if it could, the fire of the Creator, and live apart from him, and independent of him. The "Prometheus Vincit¹" is the romance of skepticism. Not less true to all time are all

¹ Of Æschylus.

details of that stately apologue. Apollo kept the flocks of Admetus, said the poets. Every man is a divinity in disguise, a god playing the fool. It seems as if heaven had sent its insane angels into our world as to an asylum, and here they will break out into their native music and utter at intervals the words they have heard in heaven; then the mad fit returns, and they mope and wallow like dogs. When the gods come among men, they are not known. Jesus was not; Socrates and Shakespeare were not. Antæus was suffocated by the grip of Hercules, but every time he touched his mother earth, his strength was renewed. Man is the broken giant, and in all his weakness, both his body and his mind are invigorated by habits of conversation with nature. The power of music, the power of poetry to unfix, and, as it were, clap wings to all solid nature, interprets the riddle of Orpheus, which was to his childhood an idle tale. The philosophical perception of identity through endless mutations of form makes him know the Proteus. What else am I who laughed or wept yesterday, who slept last night like a corpse, and this morning stood and ran? And what see I on any side but the transmigrations of Proteus? I can symbolize my thought by using the name of any creature, of any fact, because every creature is man, agent or patient. Tantalus is but a name for you and me. Tantalus means the impossibility

of drinking the waters of thought which are always gleaming and waving within sight of the soul. The transmigration of souls: that too is no fable. I would it were; but men and women are only half human. Every animal of the barn-yard, the field and the forest, of the earth and of the waters that are under the earth, has contrived to get a footing and to leave the print of its features and form in some one or other of these upright, heaven-facing speakers. Ah, brother, hold fast to the man and awe the beast; stop the ebb of thy soul—ebbing downward into the forms into whose habits thou hast now for many years slid. As near and proper to us is also that old fable of the Sphinx, who was said to sit in the roadside and put riddles to every passenger. If the man could not answer she swallowed him alive. If he could solve the riddle, the Sphinx was slain. What is our life but an endless flight of winged facts or events! In splendid variety these changes come, all putting questions to the human spirit. Those men who cannot answer by a superior wisdom these facts or questions of time, serve them. Facts incumber them, tyrannize over them, and make the men of routine, the men of *sense*, in whom a literal obedience to facts has extinguished every spark of that light by which man is truly man. But if the man is true to his better instincts or sentiments, and refuses

the dominion of facts, as one that comes of a higher race, remains fast by the soul and sees the principle, then the facts fall aptly and supple into their places; they know their master, and the meanest of them glorifies him.

See in Goethe's "Helena" ¹ the same desire that every word should be a thing. These figures, he would say, the Chirons, Griffins, Phorkyas, Helen, and Leda, are somewhat, and do exert a specific influence on the mind. So far then are they eternal entities, as real to-day as in the first Olympiad. Much revolving them, he writes out freely his humor, and gives them body to his own imagination. And although that poem be as vague and fantastic as a dream, yet it is much more attractive than the more regular dramatic pieces of the same author, for the reason that it operates a wonderful relief to the mind from the routine of customary images,—awakens the reader's invention and fancy by the wild freedom of the design, and by the unceasing succession of brisk shocks of surprise.

The universal nature, too strong for the petty nature of the bard, sits on his neck and writes through his hand; so that when he seems to vent a mere caprice and wild romance, the issue is an exact allegory. Hence Plato said that "poets utter great and wise things which they do not themselves understand." All the fictions of the Middle Age explain themselves as a masked or

¹ The second part of "Faust."

frolic expression of that which in grave earnest the mind of that period toiled to achieve. Magic, and all that is ascribed to it, is manifestly a deep presentiment of the powers of science. The shoes of swiftness, the sword of sharpness, the power of subduing the elements, of using the secret virtues of minerals, of understanding the voices of birds, are the obscure efforts of the mind in a right direction. The preternatural prowess of the hero, the gift of perpetual youth, and the like, are alike the endeavor of the human spirit "to bend the shows of things to the desires of the mind."

In "Perceforest" and "Amadis de Gaul," a garland and a rose bloom on the head of her who is faithful, and fade on the brow of the inconstant. In the story of "The Boy and the Mantle," even a mature reader may be surprised with a glow of virtuous pleasure at the triumph of the gentle Genelas; and indeed, all the postulates of elfin annals, that the Fairies do not like to be named; that their gifts are capricious and not to be trusted; that who seeks a treasure must not speak; and the like, I find true in Concord, however they might be in Cornwall or Bretagne.

Is it otherwise in the newest romance? I read "The Bride of Lammermoor." Sir William Ash-ton is a mask for a vulgar temptation, Ravenswood Castle, a fine name for proud poverty, and the foreign mission of state only a Bunyan disguise¹

¹ Only an allegorical expression.

for honest industry. We may all shoot a wild bull that would toss the good and beautiful, by fighting down the unjust and sensual. Lucy Ashton is another name for fidelity, which is always beautiful and always liable to calamity in this world.

But along with the civil and metaphysical history of man, another history goes daily forward — that of the external world — in which he is not less strictly implicated. He is the compend of time: he is also the correlative of nature. The power of man consists in the multitude of his affinities, in the fact that his life is intertwined with the whole chain of organic and inorganic being. In the age of the Cæsars, out from the Forum at Rome proceeded the great highways north, south, east, west to the center of every province of the empire, making each market-town of Persia, Spain, and Britain, pervious to the soldiers of the capital; so out of the human heart go, as it were, highways to the heart of every object in nature, to reduce it under the dominion of man. A man is a bundle of relations, a knot of roots, whose flower and fruitage is the world. All his faculties refer to natures out of him. All his faculties predict the world he is to inhabit, as the fins of the fish foreshow that water exists, or the wings of an eagle in the egg presuppose a medium like air. Insulate and you destroy him. He cannot live without a world. Put Napoleon

in an island prison, let his faculties find no men to act on, no Alps to climb, no stake to play for, and he would beat the air and appear stupid. Transport him to large countries, dense population, complex interests, and antagonistic power, and you shall see that the man Napoleon, bounded, that is, by such a profile and outline, is not the virtual Napoleon. This is but Talbot's shadow:—

“ His substance is not here :
For what you see is but the smallest part,
And least proportion of humanity :
But were the whole frame here,
It is of such a spacious, lofty pitch,
Your roof were not sufficient to contain it.”

Henry IV.

Columbus needs a planet to shape his course upon. Newton and Laplace need myriads of ages and thick-strown celestial areas. One may say a gravitating solar system is already prophesied in the nature of Newton's mind. Not less does the brain of Davy and Gay Lussac from childhood exploring always the affinities and repulsions of particles, anticipate the laws of organization. Does not the eye of the human embryo predict the light? the ear of Handel predict the witchcraft of harmonic sound? Do not the constructive fingers of Watt, Fulton, Whittemore, Arkwright predict the fusible, hard, and temperable texture of metals, the properties of stone, water, and wood? the lovely attributes of the

maiden child predict the refinements and decorations of civil society? Here also we are reminded of the action of man on man. A mind might ponder its thoughts for ages, and not gain so much self-knowledge as a passion of love shall teach it in a day. Who knows himself before he has been thrilled with indignation at an outrage, or has heard an eloquent tongue, or has shared the throb of thousands in a national exultation or alarm? No man can antedate his experience, or guess what faculty or feeling a new object shall unlock, any more than he can draw to-day the face of a person whom he shall see to-morrow for the first time.

I will not now go behind the general statement to explore the reason of this correspondency. Let it suffice that in the light of these two facts, namely, that the mind is One, and that nature is its correlative, history is to be read and written.

Thus in all ways does the soul concentrate and reproduce its treasures for each pupil, for each new-born man. He, too, shall pass through the whole cycle of experience. He shall collect into a focus the rays of nature. History no longer shall be a dull book. It shall walk incarnate in every just and wise man. You shall not tell me by languages and titles a catalogue of the volumes you have read. You shall make me feel what periods you have lived. A man shall be the Tem-

ple of Fame.¹ He shall walk, as the poets have described that goddess, in a robe painted all over with wonderful events and experiences; his own form and features by their exalted intelligence shall be that variegated vest. I shall find in him the Fore-world; in his childhood the Age of Gold; the Apples of Knowledge; the Argonautic Expedition; the calling of Abraham; the building of the Temple; the Advent of Christ; Dark Ages; the Revival of Letters; the Reformation; the discovery of new lands, the opening of new sciences, and new regions in man. He shall be the priest of Pan,² and bring with him into humble cottages the blessing of the morning stars and all the recorded benefits of heaven and earth.

Is there somewhat overweening in this claim? Then I reject all I have written, for what is the use of pretending to know what we know not? But it is the fault of our rhetoric that we cannot strongly state one fact without seeming to believe some other. I hold our actual knowledge very cheap. Hear the rats in the wall, see the lizard on the fence, the fungus under foot, the lichen on the log. What do I know sympathetically, morally, of either of these worlds of life? As long as the Caucasian man—perhaps longer—these creatures have kept their counsel beside

¹ He shall himself have experienced the great things done by great men.

² Emerson thinks of him according to his name, as the god of *all* things.

him, and there is no record of any word or sign that has passed from one to the other. Nay, what does history yet record of the metaphysical annals of man? What light does it shed on those mysteries which we hide under the names Death and Immortality? Yet every history should be written in a wisdom which divined the range of our affinities and looked on facts as symbols. I am ashamed to see what a shallow village tale our so-called History is. How many times we must say Rome, and Paris, and Constantinople? What does Rome know of rat and lizard? What are Olympiads and Consulates to these neighboring systems of being? Nay, what food or experience or succor have they for the Esquimaux seal hunter, for the Kanaka in his canoe, for the fisherman, the stevedore, the porter?

Broader and deeper we must write our annals — from an ethical reformation, from an influx of the ever new, ever sanative conscience — if we would trulier express our central and wide-related nature, instead of this old chronology of selfishness and pride to which we have too long lent our eyes. Already that day exists for us, shines in on us at unawares, but the path of science and of letters is not the way into nature, but from it, rather. The idiot, the Indian, the child, and unschooled farmer's boy, come much nearer to these, — understand them better than the dissector or the antiquary.







